IRAN and CENTRAL ASIA

(Glimpses - Past and Present)

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Preface

Central Asia and other adjacent areas remained in a state of relative isolation and neglect for a long time after the break up of Timurid empire. Being too far away from the new trading routes in east-west trade, it did not receive much attention for a while from the rising trading nations who got increasingly involved in bitter internecine struggles elsewhere.

The colonialists, however, started closing up upon them from the south as well as from the north by the 17th century. Thereafter the course of their history was destined to undergo a change by slow degrees. In due course of time their sovereign and independent status faced steady erosion. Thus within just a hundred and fifty years the once powerful and mighty empires of the Safavids of Iran and the Mughals of India ultimately degenerated into a vassal status. The region was doomed to become a ripe ground for imperialist depredations.

During the 19th century, the Qajar rulers of Iran flirted with some European powers, France in particular. In doing so they opened the floodgates for western interference in her internal affairs leading to a phased erosion of her sovereignty. Great Britain and Germany, counteracting each other's subtle moves from late 19th century, quickly grasped the strategic importance of Iran in their colonial expansion plans. Flanking the sea route to India, Iran was of great strategic importance to Grant Britain. She had used this position for interference in the Russian Civil war after October Revolution later on. The smell of oil in Khuzistan and off-shore region in the southern Iran made it later more tempting. Needless to remind that in order to achieve these motives, Great Britain had carved out for herself a sphere of influence in Iran by the beginning of the 20th century and also agreed to a similar sphere of influence for the Czarist Russia as a part of an overall inter-imperialist accommodation deal. World War II only confirmed beyond doubt the strategic importance of Iran for the British as providing access to Caucasian oil fields.

World war II forced Iran into an extremely delicate situation. It is a well known fact that Reea Shah Palavi, who had turned into a tyrant, first looked upon the Nazis, and later the Americans, as his protectors As the process of suppression of forces of liberalism had set in; there appeared on the international political scene the dominant capitalist power of the future and, therefore, the shape of the events to follow was bound to be radically different. Reza Shah Pahlavi was sent into exile and the mantle of kingship fell on the young and inexperienced shoulders of his son. Muhammad Reza was a protege of the Anglo-American imperialism. He began to thrive on the psychophancy and pamperings of his benefactors and courtiers, made himself a surrogate of the U.S., and watch -dog of their interests in the Persian Gulf. This he could have done by suppressing his people and destroying their democratic aspirations. His forced march towards the so called "Great Civilization" by opening his country to multinational exploitation and militarization led to a great disaster for his regime.

Anybody with genuine interest in the affairs of contemporary Iran, more particularly in the events shaping since 1979, cannot afford to ignore the turbulent days of her modern history from which sprang the present crisis in all its depth. To these a bare allusion has been made in the preceding lines. The revolution in Iran is a significant event in the history of decline of imperialism in the east, a significant event in the history of resurgent nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America and a noteworthy developemt in the socio-political history of Islam. Iranian experience has a certain relevance to the shaping and moulding of certain thought process of much of the Muslim world. But, notwithstanding the positive aspects of the revolution, one must not fail to see the difficulties in her path and the dangers which lie at the root of nebulous "neither East nor west" pretence which leaves anti-feudal recolution incomplete, and cannot modernise society by accelerated development of its economy. By taking an untenable "middle" position it is virtually reversing the liberation process. Nor has it succeeded in applying early Islamic virtues in their actual day to day practice. It has failed to rally the Muslim masses in Arab countries against their rulers whom it has denounced as anti-Islamic.

The papers on Iranian revolution presented in various seminars in the past, and now put together to form Part I of this Collection, have been presented while keeping in mind the sequence of events as they unfolded in that country. It is hoped that these essays will stimulate deeper study by those who are interested in the contemporary history of the region and its impact on international relations and on broader perspectives of world politics. Perhaps some lessons of lasting historical value could also be deduced form them. One would like to know whether a liberated country can avoid modernization of its culture and still survive, whether the value system of early Islam can sustain a modern state.

As far as Part II of the Collection is concerned,except for three articles, the rest deal with the historical and social aspect of mediaeval Central Asia and have primarily a research orientation.

The three exceptions, namely Lahuti, the proletarian Persian/Tajik poet', Cultural Revolution in Soviet Central Asia', and deal with contemporary Soviet Central Asian society. Much has been written about the history of Soviet power in Contral Asia. It is high time that Soviet experience of Socialist industrialization and cultural renaissance in the once incredibly backward Turkestan is properly analysed and understood particularly in the Third World countries. This experience is more relevant to us in India since we also comprise many religious, cultural, linguistic and perhaps racial entities and are facing as many and varied problems as the Socialist Central Asia faced during the formative period of Sovietization. Although our political systems differ, we may still benefit form their experience of handling similar problems by seeing upon them in a wider context, and with a certain degree of detachment.

—Dr. K. N. Pandit

PART I

IRAN

CONTENTS

Part I

Iranian Revolution—the Rationale*

Introduction

The revolution in Iran resulting in the deposition of the Shah and liquidation of monarchy, is an event of much historical significance not only to Iran but also to the world at large. The aftermath of the revolution (though its final shape is yet to emerge) i.e., Irano-US estrangement, hostages issue, purification campaign of the clergy, international commitments and involvements etc., all have now become a part of the great saga of Iran's historical struggle for liberation. Certainly the circumstances which made the Iranian people overthrow the despotic monarchical regime and rise in revolt against a super power must make an interesting study. We propose to take it up in this paper.

The first thing to do would be to propose a date line, and, in the opinion of the writer, 1953 would be the acceptable parting year. In that year, we witnessed a coup in Iran with the result that the only ray of hope for the emergence of a truly democratic and sovereign state of Iran was extinguished by the dark clouds of imperialism and neo-colonialism which actively manoeuvered reinstallation of the autocratic monarch on his throne. The legal government of Dr. Musaddegh was dismissed, Tudeh Party was outlawed, democratic institutions were suppressed, and pro-American elements led by General Zahidi and patronised by the Shah came to be activised.

Oil Consortium

The obvious sequel to the Anglo-American engineered coup of 1952, of which the Shah has made no secret in his book *The Mission for My Country*, was the galvanising into action of all imperialists and colonialist elements in Iran to perpetrate the general loot of the most precious commodity of that country, viz. Iranian oil.

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*This paper was presented in a seminar organised by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, Kashmir University in 1980.

The members of Oil Consortium agreed to distribute the spoils in the following proportion :

8 % to each of the five American Oil Companies
10 % to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
14 % to Shell (Anglo-Dutch Oil Company)
6 % to the French Oil Company

The Consortium gave out that it was negotiating only the marketing of Iranian oil but, in fact, it started exploration, exploitation and marketing of oil in a vast oil field in Khuzistan, Southern Iran. Under the Oil Nationalisation Act of 1951, this agreement was required to be ratified by the Iranian Parliament (*Majlis*) but that was never done. As such, there was general discontent, and General Zahidi's government let loose the engines of oppression to suppress the voice of the masses. Twelve persons including some students demonstrating against the government were executed.

In addition to Khuzistan oil fields, the regime let out six oil producing islands in the Persian Gulf to the Consortium. Apart from this, vital installations in the area, like the pipeline, telecommunication establishments, air-strips, asphalted roads, railway tracks etc., were also given in the control of the Consortium. Terms and conditions governing the financial aspects of the agreement were drawn in no unambiguous terms and the Consortium invariably interpreted them to suit its own interests. The agreement was drawn for 25 years and one of its clauses laid down that Iran could not revoke it before 1994. The nationalists resented the agreement tooth and nail. A leading daily *Seda-e Mardum* of Teheran called it an agreement between the wolf and the lamb. Senator Dewanbegi said in the Parliament that by accepting the agreement with the Consortium, "they had agreed to surrender to a government within a government."

Plunder of Oil

During a period of nine years (1953-1962), the Oil Consortium explored 360 million tons of crude against 325 million tons by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company during last fifty years. Iranian Oil Company produced 250 thousand tons in nine years, which is

1/1000 of what the Consortium produced. According to O' Connore, an American Oil Economist, each ton of crude Iranian oil yielded on an average 12.56 dollars profit for the Consertium. They paid neither any tax nor custom duty on it. Apart from all this, the Consortium refined only one half of the crude oil at Abadan—the world's largest refinery—with the result that half the number of Iranian labourers at the refinery was laid off. In this way the Consortium devised means to add 30 million pounds annually to its coffers. *Teheran Mosawwar* of December 1963 wrote that during last fifteen years, 15 thousand Iranian labourers in the oil industry were retrenched by the Consortium or other foreign oil companies. The living and economic conditions of the Iranian labourers working in the oil industry are reflected in a letter of one Poor-i Paidar published in the *Teheran Post* of May 1957. He said that thirty thousand labourers had left for Kuwait in search of livelihood and better service and living conditions. On the other hand the Consortium expanded its activities of exploration and exploitation of oil in southern Iran. An artificial port was built at Kharg in the Persian Gulf where hundred thousand ton tankers were automatically filled. *The Economist* of April 1962 reported the presence of more than one thousand highly paid foreign technicians in the oil industry in Iran.

Baghdad Pact

After the coup of 1953, the government declared that Iran's foreign policy would be one of positive nationalism. Official circles explained it as protection of Iranian interests against all foreign influences and no opposition to major powers. But the Baghdad Pact was signed by the regime in utter disregard of her declared policy and particularly in violation of her friendship treaty of 1921 with the Soviet Union. Large scale demonstrations against the Pact were held all over Iran. The regime came down with a heavy hand. Military courts Condemned as many as 70 persons to death.

Eisenhower Doctrine

In 1957, the regime in Iran accepted the Eisenhower Doctrine. The Doctrine was "to strengthen national independence and

sovereignty against the danger of communism." But, in truth, it was to suppress nationalist movements in Arab lands and the Middle East countries in order to safeguard American oil interests because the doctrine provided that the US could intervene militarily in the event of an 'aggression.' The 1958 revolution in Iraq now began to talk of bilateral military pact with US. In 1959, Iran virtually broke the friendship treaty of 1929 with the Soviet Union (a non-aggression pact), and concluded bilateral military pact with the US at Ankara giving that super-power permission to build military bases in Iran.

The bilateral military pact was bound to create socio-political difficulties for Iran. Between 1953 and 1961, she was compelled to spend nearly 65 milliards of rials on military installations. This equals the amount she spent between 1919 and 1959 on agriculture, irrigation, mines and industries. *The Kayhan* of July 6, 1961 wrote that on the advice of the US military experts, new military bases in four towns were being built at a cost of 15 million rials and the US government advanced loans on soft terms for the project.

Military Advisers

In 1958, there were 1200 US military advisers in Iran. They controlled all training centres, staff colleges, strategic installations in the country. Maps, plans, charts and lay-outs, were drawn under the supervision of these advisers who often were found prying about in the northern provinces which border the Soviet territories. They received inflated salaries and their pet sentence was that they were in the country "to clear her of impure elements." On Oct. 24, 1964, the Iranian *Majlis* granted political immunity to these advisers as is being granted to the diplomatic personnel. The same year, the Parliament permitted the government to finalise 200 million dollar arms deal with the US. It has been revealed by the Iranian press that the Pentagon tycoons had delineated the 'Death Region' covering parts of Northern Iran and Pakistan to be bombarded in order to forestall any Soviet atomic attack.

Financial and Economic crisis deepen

The picture of Iranian military budget between 1955 and 1961 is as under :

1954—55	5.231 million rials (pre—Baghdad Pact)
1956—59	11.431 million rials (post CENTO)
1960—61	7.2 milliard rials (1 milliard=1000 million)

Project allocations for industries for the year 1960 - 61 were to the tune of 350 million rials which is 20 times less than defence allocations for the country for the same year (*Iranian National Bank Bulletin No. 195*). Inflation held the country in its grip and foreign exchange reserves dwindled from 189 million dollars in 1958 to 70 million dollars in 1960. *The Kayhan International* of December 1961 wrote that the loans to be paid by Iran were less than the interest on them. As a result the two Seven Year Plans fell through. Mustafa 'Alam, a member of the Planning Commission said in an interview with a German correspondent that only 1/5 of total Plan allocations were made available. In the Second Seven Year Plan, 35 per cent of total allocations went to non-productive military establishment. Only 1.8 % went to education. This was not even one half of what the Planning Commission spent on the survey of roads by foreign technicians. Ahmad Aramish, the Chairman of the Planning Commission said in an interview that one of the causes of break-down of the Seven Year Plan was the lavish and unrestrained expenditures incurred on the US advisers.

Foreign Companies

In 1955, the bill allowing the investment of foreign capital was passed with a formal guarantee that no project undertaken by any foreign company would be nationalised and capital would not be withdrawn at any time. Out of 1084 foreign companies which began operations in Iran, 220 were American, 286 British, 151 German and 160 French. Each year these companies took out 1000 million pounds from Iran. The companies earned a net profit of one milliard (1000 million) dollars by the year 1950 (*Zindagi-e Bainu'l—Milali*). West Germany very effectively shared the spoils. In 1960, while inaugurating the Industrial Exhibition in Iran, the West German Chancellor, Erhardt, said that Iran did

not need heavy industries and she should continue to be an agricultural country. *Asia*, of Nov. 1950 wrote that imports were five times more than the exports.

Agriculture and Industries

The Census Report of 1956 showed that 70% of Iranian people lived in rural areas, 56 % of them were engaged in agricultural activities. 1962 Report of the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture showed that about ten thousand villages and hamlets were owned by landlords, each owning more than seven villages on an average. 85% of arable land was in the possession of those feudal lords some of whom owned more than a hundred villages each. Relations between the landlord and his tenants were reminiscent of middle age feudalistic societies. The *Ettela 'at* of December 26, 1963 gave the appalling picture of the living conditions of the tenants. *Teheren Musawwar* of February 1963 said that nearly ten thousand villagers were forced to migrate to Teheran city annually to escape oppression by the landlords. To this figure, one thousand retrenched labourers from Oil Consortium every year should be added up.

A labourer in 1960 had to put in 12 to 14 hours of labour each working day against an average wage of 68 *tumans* a month. The cost of one kilogram of bread than was one *tuman*. No insurance policy or security conditions were provided to the workers. There were large scale labour demonstrations and unrest. In Isfahan Spinning Mills, workers demanded 12 days leave on full pay in a year. Unrest spread to many other factories and the government declared demonstrations as illegal. This was followed by repression and large scale arrests. In 1961, the teachers demanded increase in their salaries but the police opened fire on a demonstrating crowd in Maidan-i Baharistan killing many. In protest, thirty thousand teachers and students boycotted educational institutions. The government had to resign but not before resorting to more repressive and brutal measures.

Peasant Revolt

The peasant revolt of 1960 was sparked off by the denial of the landlords of the northern province of Gilan to provide irrigation facilities to their tenants because the tenants had not voted in

favour of the candidate of these landlords to the 20th *Majlis*. In sympathy with them, the students in Isfahan and other cities took out large scale processions. They protested against wholesale rigging in the elections to the 20th *Majlis*. In May 1961, the students demonstrated against the holding of CENTO Health Conference at Pahlavi University in Shiraz. They demanded return to nationalistic policy and holding of fresh elections. The regime let loose the engines of oppresston, the SAVAK. Student leaders were executed. Khosrov Ruzbeh had been executed in 1958, Alavi in 1959, and five Azerbaijani student leaders and members of the Central Committee of the underground Tudeh Party were executed in 1961.

The Farce of Land Reforms

The consequences of the revolt of the peasants were grave. The regime thought of appeasing them and thus the so-called land reforms were initiated and of which full propaganda was made under the slogan of White Revolution. In an interview with the editor of *Life* in 1963, the Shah said that 519 villages of his private holding were sold to 42 thousand families. He had bequeathed 1092 villages to his three year old son, the crown prince. Agrarian Reform Bill of 1960 fixed the ceiling of 800 hectares of dry land and 400 hectares of irrigated land for a single holder. Twice the maximum holding could be sold to a relative. *Teheran Economist* called it a 'new colouring and finish to the feudal ownership.'

CENTO and the aftermath

Iran's alignment with CENTO generated mass resentment at home. Within six months, two governments fell. Economy was shattered. All progressive and nationalistic elements demanded Iran to quit CENTO and join the non-aligned group. *Donya* of May 1961 wrote that Iran's continuation in CENTO was suicidal and non-alignment was the only right course for her foreign policy. Despite suppression, Jibbhe-e Milli, the pro-Musaddegh party gained strength under the leadership of men like Mehdi Bazargan, Keshawarz Sadr, Allahyar Saleh, Dr. Karim Sanjabi and others. They demanded revision of agreement with the Oil Consortium,

revoking of agreement with CENTO and of bilateral military pact with the US, restoration of individual liberty, protection of the constitution and re-election to the 20th *Majlis*.

Finding that the anti-regime forces were gaining strength, the Shah dissolved the two political parties and replaced them by only one party, the newly formed Hezb-e-Rastakhiz. Its foundation was laid on three principles, (a) loyalty to the constitution (b) monarchical government (c) revolution of the Shah and the nation. Non-conformists and Marxists were declarad traitors and the Shah said that their place was not in Iran. Obviously one party system meant concentration of more power in the monarchy.

The Clergy

Religious reactionaries colluding with the reactionary landlords cashed on the poverty and illiteracy of the masses, In June 1962, the *mullas* exploited the mourning assemblies and incited trouble. Khumeini was arrested and exiled to Najaf. The Shah tightened his grip on the centres of religion. At the same time the regime posed as the devoted upholder of religion and of Shia faith. New and modern mosques were built, excellent copies of the Qur'an were printed, education corps was required to preach religion in rural areas and in 1966 the Shah ordered repairs to the tomb of Imam Husain at Kerbala.

Foreign Policy again

The decade between 1962 and 1972 was a decade of economic revival and progress all over the world and Iran too had her share of prosperity in proportion. But in her foreign policy she had made a pronounced tilt towards the capitalist bloc. In an interview with the correspondent of *al-Siyasat* of Kuwait in 1975, the Shah said that Iran had contributed large sums to International Monetary Agencies. A year later, Jamshed Amuzgar, the Home Minister, said that Iran had extended 7.7 milliard dollars (7000.7 million dollars) as loan and aid to capitalist or developed countries. In 1975, Hoveda, the Prime Minister said that Iran's loans and aid to the capitalist countries and multinationals had gone up to nine milliard dollers (about 7200 crore rupees).

Arms purchase

Between 1972 and 1974, Iran purchased arms worth 8 milliard (8000 million) dollars from the US and other Western countries. According to UN statistics, this was 40% of the total arms sold in these three years all over the world. This means that out of every hundred aircrafts sold by the capitalist countries, forty were purchased by Iran. Her purchases included the latest model bomber jets, helicopters, heavy tanks, war ships including Hovercrafts etc. The biggest naval base with the latest equipment was established at Bandar Shah and then the Shah began to dream of becoming the policeman of the Persian Gulf. He dreamt of 'Great Civilization'. In this way Iran was only returning the major portion of her oil gains to the capitalists for arms which she neither needed nor could deploy. In 1974, the biggest naval and air exercises were held in the Indian Ocean by the CENTO in collaboration with the US.

Labour and Living Conditions

Kayhan of May 1975 gave the following statistics :

Profession	income p.m. 1960	1975	increase %
M.P.	25,000 rials	1,15,000 rls	400 %
Director General	30,000 rials	1,5 ,000 rls	400 %
Governor of a Province	20,000 rials	90,000 rials	400 %
Labourer (kiln)	3,030 rials	3,600 rials	20 %

Teheran Journal of June 1973 reported that one fourth of total workers live in Teheran and 75 per cent of them live in rented houses In 1975, house rent in Teheran increased two-fold in comparison to two previous years. Most of the labourers lived in a single room. 68 per cent of the houses in Teheran were in southern slum area ; 70 per cent of the labourers in Teheran were non-skilled, 2 per cent skilled and the rest unemployed and beggars. Between 1970 and 1975, there were as many as nine major labour unrests in the country in which arrests, shooting and execution by military courts were effected.

Student unrest

Teheran University Campus has always been the centre of political unrest and a major irritant to the police and SAVAK. The National Volunteers (*Chereekaha-e-milli*) and organisations of the students not only demonstrated violently but also took up arms in the forest ranges of Gilan, Mazandaran and some more places. In 1971, the SAVAK Chief said in an interview that the armed volunteers had organised their centres in as many as seventy major towns and its members, mostly students, were Maoists.

In 1971, the students of Teheran University had protested against the deployment of Iranian troops in Zofar (Oman). Some airmen of the Air Force were arrested and executed for refusing to attack Zofar. This caused serious unrest among the students. In 1971, attempts were made at kidnapping the US Ambassador in Teheran. President Nixon's visit to Teheran in 1972 was reacted with nine bomb explosions and Tahiri was shot dead by a student demonstrator. In 1973, SAVAK announced that it had foiled an attempt on the life of the Shah.

In retaliation, two of the most prominent student leaders, namely Khosrov Golsorkhi and Karamat Danishjuyan were sentenced to death for alleged anti-Shah activities. Massive demonstrations were held against the brutal repression by the police and SAVAK, and slogans against despotism, imperialism, militarism and also against arrests and excesses were raised all over the country. Suppression of Iranian intellectuals through arrests, incarceration, torture, exiles etc., was boldly condemned by the students. Leading intellectuals like Saeed Sultanpur, Dr. Ali Shariati, Feridun Tunkaboni, Nemat Mirzadeh and Houshang Golsheri languished in prisons.

Political workers in prisons

On May 17, 1971, the British Committee for Defence of Iranian Political Prisoners held a press conference in the House of Commons in London. It was revealed that the number of political prisoners in Iran was about twenty thousand, most of whom were students. *The Economist* of April 1974 said in one of its issues that the number of political prisoners had gone up to forty thousand. In a press conference given at Washington the same year, the Shah reduced this number to three thousand.

The treatment meted out to political prisoners in jails was reported as barbarous and shameful. *The News Week* of October 14, 1974 revealed that most barbarous and third degree methods of torture were being used against political prisoners. The number of people executed between 1972 and 1977 ran into thousands. In many countries of the world including the USA, voices were raised and protest rallies held against the violation of Human Rights in Iran. The reign of terror had been let loose.

In January 1976, Richard Eden was deputed by the Association of American Jurists to study the Iranian situation. His report is an eye-opener with regard to the treatment of the prisoners and the repressive policy of the regime. In an interview with the press at Rome in 1976, he said :

"The next of kin of the prisoners are not allowed to meet them. During my ten days stay in Teheran, ten persons were executed and other ten were killed as a result of clashes with the police. A large number of people are arrested without being shown cause but obviously because they might have expressed their dissatisfaction with the government. They languish in prisons for an indefinite length of time and without legal prosecution. An atmosphere of terror and tyranny prevails in that country. To whomsoever I talked, I never found him convinced that the charges brought against him, and for which he was condemned to death, were true. The government circles say that not more than three thousand are in prisons but some of the knowledgeable persons to whom I talked estimated the number between forty and one hundred thousand.

The French paper *Liberation* of May 29, 1976 wrote that between 1971 and 1975 as many as five hundred political prisoners were either executed or tortured to death by SAVAK. The International Democratic Federation of Women issued strong protest against the policy of terror and suppression adopted by the despotic monarchical regime. It said that among the persons executed

were two young women tortured to death and a third woman rearing a four year old child was executed by the firing squad.

Conclusion

This picture of pre-revolution Iran shows that the amassing lava of discontentment was bound to explode sooner or later and the supremacy of the masses was to be established. Now the lava has burst but the events have shifted from one extreme to another. This situation may appear baffling to an observer but a revolution so vital to the future of a nation is bound to be complex in its totality and many factors and elements have to act and react before the events take a final shape. Many doubts and questions may be raised about the future of Iran but those conversant with her history in the past and with an eye on the future, will have little hesitation in conceding that as the days roll by, angularities will be ironed out and Iran will, after a long slumber, rejoin the fraternity of nations struggling for democratic ways of life.

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Iran in Ferment*

Prehaps it is yet premature to spell out what bearing Iranian revolution may have on the contemporary history of the Muslim world. The picture is hazy and contours undelineated.

In the first place, leaving other things aside, doubts are expressed in certain quarters whether the phenomena prevailing in that country should be characterised a revolution? To some it is only a peculiarly sectarian and latently nationalistic movement. To others it is nothing more than a fetish of superficial religious sentiment and not an Islamic revolution despite the tall claim made. Such critics base their assertion on the text book interpretation of a revolution, which, broadly speaking, means a total and radical change in the prevailing socio-political set up of a given society. In other words they mean to say that mere change of a traditionally mornarchical state into a pseudo-theocratic and pseudo-democratic state would not account for a revolution even if, as it were, accompanied by an element of rather brutal reprisals and revenge. The revolution has not perculated to the core of the socio-political system, they argue. To further simplify their contention, it is said that the movement lacks a well defined ideology and has, at best, thrived on stimulating the endemic protestive sentiment of her Shia population.

There can be two opinions on this point. The revolution in Iran is still in progress and, except for some sporadic acts of retaliation, anything by the name of a counter-revolution in coganizable shape and size is still nowhere in sight. Out of this melee what kind of picture will emerge in final analysis, is yet to be seen.

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* This paper was presented at a Seminar organised by the Iqbal Institute of the University of Kashmir in Oct., 1981.

However in attempting to understand the formulative process of this revolution, there is the unavoidable need of recapitulating succinctly a few far-reaching developments in Iranian history during the preceding one century.

The 1979 mass upsurge resulting in the removal of monarchy is, among other things, the cumulative reaction to prolonged imperial and colonial exploitation of and interference in the affairs of Iran. Her geographically strategic position exposed her to the British imperialism articulating in considerations for her Indian empire. To counteract the growing influence first of the Napoleon and then of the Tsarist Russia. the British strove to push the sphere of their influence as far northward as possible. In the first decades of the 20th century, presence of oil in southern province of Khuzistan bordering on the shores of the Persian Gulf, sounded the first siren of danger to Iran's independence and sovereignty. World War II unfolded her geographical as well as strategic importance not only to the Allies but to the world at large, for, it now became clear that Iran was a corridor linking the two ends of the world, and with that began the story of her travail.

World War II sucked Iran into the orbit of global politics. She could have hardly thought that she was to become a colony of a country and a people that had just two hundred years back, fought to liberate themselves from the colonial yoke. In 1953, the Americans engineered the reversal of a coup in Iran and re-establishment of the autocratic regime of the late Shah. The sordid story of this hostile and bellicose act of the Americans against the people of Iran, against the recognised norms of international relationship, and against the spirit of human dignity and liberty embodied in the sacrifices of her own national heroes and enshrined in her great national document—the Constitution - has been vividly told by no outsider but a highly placed official of her intelligence agency, the CIA, named Mr. Kermit Roosevelt in a book entitled *Counter Coup* published in USA quite recently.

For 27 years since 1953, Iran was faced with the formulation of two paradoxical situations unprecedented in her history. On the

one hand there was a forced march onwards to modernization, and on the other steady suppression of civic freedom. The forced march to modernization was augmented by the colossal petro-dollar booty. But Iranian society was only a consumer society with no basic infrastructure of a really modern industrialized state having self-generating viable economy and the necessary infra-structure to absorb modernization. The suppression of individual freedom and of democratic insitutions was the inevitable sequel to Anglo-American exploitation perpetrated and channelled through the instrumentality of a dictatorial and intransigent monarchy. Iran became a typical and pathetic example of a new version—rather the 20th century edition of imperialist exploitation. The more the inflow of petro-dollars, the less the attention towards the fulfilment of the requirements of basic industries and their infra-structure. And when voices were raised, the autocratic regime came down with a heavy hand. Liberal elements were brutally supressed and freedom of press and platform was curtailed and curbed. The *Majlis* became a house of Anglo-American lackeys and its members cared more for selfish ends than for the people whose representatives they claimed to be. The economy of the country was tailored to suit the capitalist ideology and Iran became a vast colony for the western capitalists as well as Japan for perpetrating general loot. With the gulf between the rich and the poor ever widening, with the wealth being distributed inequitably, the age-old feudalistic system prevailing more oppressively than before, with the multi-nationals squeezing the last drop of blood from the Iranian vein, with the rural population migrating to cities in multitudes and unemloyment on the increase, with hundreds of thousands of so-called American technicians, advisers, consultants etc. dogging the Iranian Ministeries, government departments and big and influential business houses and above all with the gigantic oil cartels holding the Third World at ransom through their grip on Iranian oil, it would have been nothing but irony of fate if the resentment had not shaped into a mass upsurge, a tide which no power could stem. The Iranian revolution taking place in the wake of ruthless internationl rivalries, and directed against the mightiest power man on earth has been capable of creating, will remain an inexhaustible source of

inspiration for the oppressed and exploited nations of the world.

Now what direction has the revolution taken ? The movement was mainly guided and controlled by the clergy or the *Mullas* headed by Ayatollah Khumeini who is now addressed as Imam. The *Mullas* numbering about one lakh in a population of over three crores have always wielded considerable influence among the masses of Iranian people who are largely illiterate. The objective before these religious divines, according to their own pronouncements, was to establish an Islamic state, and the first step towards its realization was the removal of the regime which ironically had been more vociferous than the *mullas* themselves proclaiming its adherence to the Shia faith and Islam. As far as the first requirement was concerned, the *mullas* found quick and rather unsolicited support of the inveterate leftists called the Jibbhe-e Milli with its splinter groups, namely Mujahideen-Khalq, Peykar, Forqan and also Tudeh. When the first act of the drama was over, the ways parted. The end of monarchy was the beginning of anarchy. It is quite understandable that the orthodox *mullas* should now unleash a tirade of condemnation of the leftist elements whose participation in the revolution had precipitated the downfall of the regime of the Shah. Now they came to be branded as heretics, un-Islamic and even monarchists.

The influence of clergy among the Shia masses of Iranian people cannot be underestimated. Even the higher strata of that society could not remain immune to this influence. The attitude of women folk of Naseru'd-Din Shah Qajar in the fourth decade of the 19th century towards the tobacco movement is well known. The *mulla* influence assumes almost reverential dimension from yet another aspect of Shia history. The history of Iran has repeatedly revealed the deep and indelible impact left on the Shia mind by the tragedy of Kerbala. The yearly *ashura tazias* are the recrudescence of Shia faith in the blessedness of martyrdom achieved in a struggle against the unjust. In the context of her recent history, the struggle was directed against the vicious and gross interference and exploitation by the imperialists and the Shah was a symbol of wicked forces that had crushed the soul of righteousness on the plains of Kerbala thirteen hundred and odd years ago. During the

bloody demonstrations of 1963, the late Shah warned Ayatollah Khumeini not to involve himself in politics like the late Ayatollah Burujardi. In reply, Ayatullah Khumeini told the late Shah that Burujardi was a descendant of Imam Hasan whereas he himself was the decendant of Imam Husain. (*Teheran Times*, June 4, 1981).

Now Iran has been converted into an Islamic Republic, a theocratic state. Authority has pased into the hands of the clergy who have been appointed to various administrative, judicial and legislative offices. The constitution, hurriedly drawn after the collapse of the monarchy, places clergy in a very authoritative position. Thus they have been invested with the temporal as well as ecclesiastical authority. This is a significant development and a salient feature of the revolution. The history of church in Iran shows that despite its influence and strength, it always desisted from acquisition of political power and remained almost contented with the spiritual leadership of the nation. The *mullas* might have come out to correct a particular stance of the authorities in regard to certain issue, but once the direction had been given, the clergy returned to the mosques and the *maktabs* to resume their normal functions. But the case of the present revolution is different and somewhat unique. So far there appears no sign of *mullas* willing to withdraw from the scene of political power. Do they intend to continue with it ? It appears they do.

It is often said that a revolution must have an ideology behind it if it is to succeed. Has the present Iranian revolution an ideology ? This is a pertinent question germane to the ethos of the revolution. We may not attach more then necessary importance to casual, and more often, irresponsible statements issued by some of the *mulla* leaders in Iran tody. The fact is that a clear cut ideology and a definite philosophy which could lend desired credibility to the revolution, is still wanting. True that some of the more vocal and garrulous *mullas* can harangue their audience with jargons like Islamic Thought, Islami Law, Islamic Justice and so forth and so on, but an ideology which could justifiably make a revolution constructive and meaningful in a contemporary society has got to be clear, rational and realistic. Even if there is anything of the sort, inclusive

of Islamic ideology, there are so many shrill notes orchesterated in succession that a sober voice gets completely drowned.

In the absence of a comprehensive manifesto or a directive or a document listing aims and objectives of the revolution, it is rather only presumptuous to deal with the nature and impact of the revolution on the Muslim societies. However the only authoritative document available to us is the volume entitled *Hukumat-i Islami*, a collection of the speeches of Ayatollah Khumeini. The bare idea which we gather form the thesis of Ayatollah Khumeini about the current ideology is that of *Velayat-e Faqih*. Whereas Ayatollah Khumeini, the propounder of the concept, has registered the support and agreement of the hard liners like Ayatollah Yazdi, Hojjatolislam Rafsanjani and the late Ayatollah Behishti, the fact is that there are a number of the divines who are not reconciled to the concept though they may not have expressed their disagreement publicly. Ayatollah Taleghani is referred to in this context.

Put briefly, the concept of *Velayat-e faqih* is the supreme guardianship of the Muslim nation by the learned and the just doctor of Islamic theology. In his own words Ayatollah Khumeini explains (p. 36) "If a person possessing the qualities of knowledge of law and justice runs the government, he will be holding the same *Velayat* for the govenance of society which the prophet had. It is obligatory and necessary for everybody to obey him."

In its message to the 13th Annual Conference of the Islamic Students Associations in the United States and Canada, the Foreign Committee of Islamic Republican Party of Iran spelt out the guidelines for the revolutionary struggle. The first item of the guidelines reproduced from the *Teheran Times* of June 2, 1981 reads :

"Since *Velayat-e Faqih* is valued as the supreme Islamic principle in pursuit of the historical mission of spiritual leadership—*Imamat*—the committed Muslim nation should renew their pledge with the jurisprudents alongwith the Imam's line on account of the *Velayat-e Faqih*".

When analysed, the concept reveals that the source of power and authority in the Muslim state will be the *Faqih* who is holding

the *Velayat* and not people whose *Velayat* he holds. This inference is confirmed by the Islamic Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran which says :

"The consignment of the presidential authorities is the exclusive commission of the supreme leader of the Revolution Imam Khumeini—in accordance with the *Velayat-e Faqih*" *Teheran Times* Aug 4, 1981.

The main problem as already indicated arises form a prospect shaping from the wielding and exercise of political as well as spiritual authority by the divines. Conscious of this phenomena and the discontent it is likely to generate, Ayatollah Khumeini has devoted a major portion of his thesis to prove that the *fuqaha* and *ulema* are the rightful persons to hold the temporal authority in the Muslim state besides the spiritual authority. He has supported the argument by drawing extensively from the holy book and tradition, and by his own interpretation of historical events. In the process, as may be seen, he finds himself involved in delicate controvercies and intricate interpretations from which he can disentangle himself only with some difficulty. By way of example, while leaning fully on the tradition *al'ulema varasatu'l-anbiya*, he has to debate the point who the *ulema* are ? Are they the learned men of the *umma* or the Imams? Then again he is constrained to debate the scope of difference between *nabuwwat* and *velayat*.

Therefore what we find in the thesis of *Velayat-e Faqih* of Ayatollah Khumeini is only a strong justification for theologians and Islamic doctors of divinity assuming political authority of the Muslim state on the Qur' anic *ayats* and tradition. But what is conspicuously missing in the thesis is its operative part and its practical implications particularly in the context of scientific and technological societies in the last decade of the twentieth century.

On June 21, 1981, when the Iranian *Majlis* removed Bani Sadar from the presidency by a landslide majority of 93 per cent votes, the Speaker, Hojjatolislam Rafsanjani, in his tirade against the president accused him of having said in the Constituent Assembly that he disagreed with the concept of *Velayat-e Faqih* for nine

reasons. Unforunately these nine reasons were never publicised and I have not been able to list them otherwise the discussion would have been more meaningful. However, the *Teheran Times* columnist, writing in its issue of July 8, 1981, came out with a story under the caption 'Coup d' etat planned by the end of July 1981 in Iran.' Commenting on the role of Bani Sadar the columnist wrote :

"To eliminate the clergy from power and strengthen his own position, Bani Sadar accused the *Mullas* of being poor economists, short sighted politicians, and unskilful strategists."

This statement can be a pointer to the line of argument Bani Sadar adopted in disagreeing with the concept of *Velayat-e Faqih.*

Supposing we accept the concept of *Velayat-e Faqih* as a viable theory for an Islamic state without of course proposing to make a comparative study between this concept and the one floated in another Islamic non-secular state, namely the concept of *Nizam-e Mustafa* in Pakistan, a few questions shall have to be answered. These are ;

1. If the source of power and authority is the '*faqih*' holding the *velayat*, what safeguards are there that with the passage of time and with no legal and constitutional restraints, the institution does not degenerate into a directionless dictatorship ? Was not the *khutba* read in the name of the Caliphs of Baghdad in mediaeval times and did not that court at last degenerate into a squalid house of intrigues and blasphemies ?

2 If in the words of Ayatollah Khumeini the *faqih* fulfilling the two conditions is to enjoy the same scope of political authority of the state as the Prophet enjoyed in his times, does it mean that 'Ali's temporal authority as the *faqih* in holding *Velayat* had the same scope as that of the Prophet and will the subsequent *faqih's* authority have the same scope as that of Ali's ?

3. The concept lays down two most essential conditions for the *faqih* to hold the '*velayat*.' These are knowledge of law and justice.

Now as far as knowledge of law is concerned, the crux of the matter is whether the knowledge of religious law, and that too of Shia faith, howsoever profound and infallible, is enough for a supreme authority of a Muslim state in the 20th century ? Is this authority to ignore and set aside the entire plethora of social, political, economic, financial, international and other laws which man has evoived after long and strenuous experiences of social intercourse ?

4. From constitutional point of view, it has to be explained what will be the norm to determine the relation between the constitutionally elected authority in a Muslim state and the *faqih* holding *velayat*. Frequent reference to the electorate will make a mockery of the democratic institutions as of the institutions of the *velayat-e faqih*. In the event of disagreement whose will shall prevail and why ? The recent case of *Qisas* bill may be an indicator. The question, therefore, arises how the Shia church is to share power with the constitutionally elected authority without jeopardizing the legal position of such authority ?

As far as the case of justice is concerned, the fundamental question is whether the three organs of the state are to act independently or not ? This mean whether the judges are to be non-party men or not ? To call themselves as *Hezbollahis* (men of God's party) and argue that its members are incorruptible is to deny the inherent weaknesses in human beings. Rejecting the demand of Bani Sadar that judges should not belong to a political party, Ayatollah Beheshti, the then Chief Justice of Islamic Revolutionary Court, in the course of his address to the weekly press conference on June 4, 1981, put forth the fantastic argument that in Islamic culture judges are bound to be just and neutral. (*Teheran Times* June 4, 1981). One might have asked him, "You may be just but you are not neutral. You are in your post because you are not neutral." Under these circumstances the matter of justice cannot be over simplified to suit the imagination of the propounder of the theory of *Velayat-e Faqih.*

In connection with another aspect of the concept of *Velayat-e Faqih*, Khumeini and his spokesmen refer to the School of Islamic

Thought. Again one is tempted to say that this is a vague concept as long as its practicability in historical perspective remains undefined. Naturally, a school of thought must be dynamic and Islam also does not approve of stagnation and immoveability. In his address to the Islamic Association for Science and Technology Faculty and members of the Organisation for Scientific and Industrial Research on May 26, 1981, Ayatollah Khumeini said, "We want universities which should be on the level of theological centres which were never dependent on foreign. We want universities on the pattern of ancient times." (*Teheran Times* May 27, 1981). To equate the level of a modern scientific and technological university with all its ramifications with that of a theological centre of mediaeval times is only to support reaction in letter and in spirit. One wonders if any developing society will accept it. While developing countries are saving every penny they can to invest in widening the facilities and raising the levels of higher, scientific and technical education and are reforming the existing educational patterns to keep pace with the fast developments in science and technology, the ruling group in Iran is delighted to call their movement a *Maktabi* movement and induce the youth to look to the *maktabs* for satiating their thirst for knowledge. Again, it is just unrealistic on the part of the group to think of scientific advancement without foreign technical know-how particularly when the primary requirements of industrial base are still wanting.

In her foreign affairs, the Islamic Republic of Iran has declared that she will adopt the policy of neither West nor East but Islamic. The slogan when orchesterated among the masses may have the desired response but when faced with the realities of situation, it will prove only hollow. In the complex world of 20th century, human cultures have broken the barriers that divided them for ages. Spheres of collaboration and cooperation are widening. Science and technology have made deep inroads even in the insular societies. What is more, the geographical situation of Iran is such that she remains exposed to influences from the west and the east. The greatness of Iranian culture and civilization owes largely to her geographical situation. Throughout her long and chequered history, she has, like a truly great nation,

never closed doors upon fresh ideas and enriching influences of culture. The advent of Islam and ennoblement of Islamic culture in itself is an ample proof of this assertion. It is fantastic that out of tune slogans are raised now and then by some irresponsible people there.

The last factor of the ideology of *Velayt-e Faqih* which we would like to deal with in this paper is the idea of export of Iranian Islamic Revolution. In a speech quoted by *Teheran Times* of July 29, 1981, the late President Rajai said that Islamic forces will set up the flag of *tawhid* throughout the world. Not to speak of the world, export of revolution to Muslim states alone is nothing but a wishful thinking. Is not the Muslim world divided politically and ideologically ? Regional, national, racial and sectarian prejudices among the Muslims have not been eliminated nor ironed out. National interests have never been sacrificed for the so-called Islamic interests. On June 2, 1981, the Islamic Republic of Iran condemned the forthcoming conference of Islamic foreign ministers to be held in Baghdad. The newespaper *al-Waqayeh* of April 17, 1981, appearing from Baghdad, reported that a bill was passed in that country under which an Iraqi husband divorcing an Iranian wife would receive a cash prize of 2400 Iraqi dinars. Whereas Ayatollah Khumeini is talking of *Velayat-e Faqih* and the rule of the *ulema*, Sadat has taken Egypt's 3500 mosques into government control, imprisoned about 700 of clergy with another seven thousand on his list.

The propounders of the concept of *Velayat-e Faqih* ought to remember that there are other minorities in Iran; the Christians, the Zoroastrians, the Bahais, the Sunnis etc. The rights of religious minorities have been set down, conceded and protected by legalised international institutions like the UN of which Iran is a member. Imposition of *jaziya* on them will have repercussions which may not be in the interests of the system.

The policy towards the political opponents of the *Maktabi* movement as declared by Ayatollah Khumeini in his speech of July 16, 1981 is contrary to all recognised norms and is bound to land the theocratic state in trouble. He says :

We are now fluctuating between two extreme dilemmas-we wonder whether we should eliminate them from the social scene, the same plight as we imposed on Muhammad Reza or we should call them to peaceful submission to the Islamic doctrines.

What we see in this is one and only one thing-no room for tolerance.

In final analysis we are convinced that Iranian people suffered the worst sort of exploitation by the imperialists and the capitalists, and that they were justified in bringing about a revolution. We are convinced that dependence on super-powers should be replaced by self-reliance. But most of all, we are convinced that Iranian scene has fluctuated from one extreme to another extreme. We hope that the golden mean which indeed is one of the brightest teachings of Islam will not be something elusive for the great and gifted Iranian nation whose contribution to the development and enrichment of human culture has been the richest of legacies man can boast of. Will she now accept to be culturally sliced and emotionally truncated ? Perhaps not.

Sources

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2. *Teheran Times*, June 2, 1981.
3. *Teheran Times*, June 4, 1981.
4. *Teheran Times*, July 8, 1981.
5. *Teheran Times*, July 29, Aug. 4, 1981.
6. *Hukumat-e Islami*, Teheran.
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Theory and Practice of Islamic State of Iran*

Introduction

Whether the 1979 revolution in Iran, resulting in the overthrow of the despotic monarchy, was inevitable or not is no more a moot point. After a long spell of calculated silence and pretentious indifference, even the capitalist press has come out with inner stories of blatant imperialist, and particularly American, interference in the internal matters of Iran during the monarchical regime. In this context some sensational revelations have been made by the American analyst Scott Armstrong in a series of articles in the *Washington Post* of November 1981 and onwards. Even the Shah himself in his autobiography[1] has made no secret of formalised American interference in his administration and policies.

The Iranian revolution can claim to have some novel features, one among which is that, at its culmination point, the popular anti-monarchical mass movement passed into the hands of Islamic political forces. The mosque became the main organisational base of the revolution, and the Shiite branch of Islam, taditionally sacrificial in its character, became the ideological banner under which the initially non-violent demonstrators pledged themselves to the cause of social justice. To this revolutionary struggle, as we know, the Shia clerical hierarchy became the vanguard. The revolution developed along an anti-imperialist and anti-monarchy orientation. Though essentially an expression of class struggle, yet in terms of ideology and as manifested by the Shia theological Estate, it is an Islamic revolution. However, the first phase of the revolution was over with the liquidation of monarchy, but the second phase was marked by the struggle inside the revolutionary camp in which real

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progressive forces came to be relegated to the background making room for the Shia theological estate whose members must naturally vie with one another in pronouncing their unflinching adherence to the pre-modern era of Islamic society when their socio-political status had yet experienced no threat of erosion from the advancing scientific knowledge of the 20th century. Thus instead of themselves moving a step forward, they put the cart before the horse by exhorting society to go a hundred steps backward and, in process, are bound to confront serious contradictions when theory is required to be translated into practice. This is precisely what we intend studying in this paper.

The Structure

The first thing which ought to be done, is to briefly examine the structure of the theocratic regime in Iran. What obtains at the moment may be defined as a western borrowed idea of a democratic state with a super-imposition of Shia theocratic hierarchy. Upto the level of an elected *Majlis*, a President and the representative government, the structure is democratic in form, but then there is the Guardian Council comprising a 'sacerdotal group', and atop is the Supreme Theologian (*vali / faqih*) to whom the land and the people, nay the entire Islamic *umma* in the Shia interpretation is a *velayat* or 'patriarchate'. This means that two structures function simultaneously one of which is subservient to two authorities at one and the same time *i.e.*, the electorate and the patriarchate, in a way that the latter has a veto and an over-riding authority on all the organs of the State as well as the conscience of the people. In this sort of dichotomy, functional as well as conceptual differences, sharp and conflicting, are bound to occur. The Speaker of the *Majlis*, Hojjatolislam Rafsanjani, was only confirming this truth by accusing the dismissd President Bani Sadr of disregarding *velayat-e faqih.*[2] While Bani Sadr considered the *mullas* as poor politicians and bad economists, Ayatollah Khumeini, in turn, decreed Bani Sadr's wife as illegal (*haram*) for him on the eve of the finalisation of his dismisal case.[3] The score on which the two took up defensive positions, thus gets crystallised. When President Bani Sadr accused Hojjatolislam Sadegh Khalkhali, the 'hanging judge' of torture in prisons, he

rejected the charge saying, "If one talks of Islamic rules, then all the decisions I made conformed to them. If one speaks of western democratic procedures under which the accused should have lawyers, then we have never respected those rules.[4]

The Vela at-e Faqih

With the situations as it is, it becomes quite interesting to examine the functional position and status of the *faqih* in his *velayat*. In particular, it will be observed that in the words of the columnist of *Tehern Times* of August 4, 1981, "according to the Islamic Constitution, the consignment of Presidential authority is exclusive commission of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, Imam Khumieni, in accordance with the *Velayat-e Faqih*." This lays bare the fragile position of the President whom the electorate has installed in that position in a free election. On the other hand, the invulnerable position of the symbol of *vilayat-e faqih* gets reinforced by the colour of divinity far beyond the reproach of the mortals. "The Imam is not only the Imam, but the Vice-Regent of Mehdi, the 12th hidden Imam and the *locum tenens* of the Immaculate," says Hashimi Rafsanjani, the Speaker of the Iranian *Majlis*.[5] Had not the late Shah likewise divinised his position ? The change in the nomenclature from Arya Mehr to Velayt-e Faqih is not only the continuation of dictatorship but in fact a super-dictatorship with transcendental dimensions. Making an appraisal of the position of Ayatollah Khumeini's regime, the leader of Mujahedin-e Khalq, Masu'd Rajavi writes in *Iran Liberation* of October 4, 1982, "The doctrine of Religious Guardianship (*velayat-e faqih*) is aimed at consolidating repressive theocratic rule. It means absolute dictatorship and monopolism. In other words, Khumeini implicitly claims to be God. Scanning his speeches, one finds terms as God, Islam and Revolution as his own pseudonyms. Opposition to him is regarded to be tantamount to opposing God. In his speeches, replace God, Islam and Revolution by Khumeini and you will get a clear grasp of his real intentions".

In order to lend reinforced strength to his own concept of *velayat-e faqih*, Ayotolloh Khumeini wants to reverse the process

of history by saying that the Caliphs, right from the time of the Umayyids and 'Abbasids down to Reza Shah Pahlavi, were all usurpers, and true Islam had not been understood to this day.[6] Does it mean that Islam with all its history, culture and civilization of 1400 years is unrealistic one, and now a man by the name Ayatollah Ruhollah Khumieni al-Musavi has arisen in Iran to give the world the Islam in its pristine purity ? By implication it means that he will do what Mehdi, the hiden Imam, is said to do. The Shias firmly believe that Imam Mehdi will return, but as Ayatollah Shariatmadari put it, "not in Boeing 747".[7]

The position and function which Ayatollah Khumeini has now accepted is diametrically opposed to his own utterances. In a taped speech in France, he had said, *"man yak talaba hastam wa bar mi gardam be Qom wa talabagi khawaham kard."* (I am a student ; I shall return to Qom and attend to my theological studies).[8] Far from engaging himself in the task of poring over the scriptures, we find him day in and day out, signing decrees of execution, imprisonment and expulsion of his co-religonists, most of whom had suffered torture at the hands of the monarchical regime. Speaking to the people about the proposed nonaligned meet in Iraq, Ayatollah Khumeini said, "Even Jesus who could raise people from the dead would not be able to rescue this dead man (President Saddam of Iraq).[9] And, in the case of late President Sadaat, he says, "The Egyptian Pharaoh was despatched to Pharaoh's abode."[10] Not to speak of the Vice-Regent of the Imam, the Imams did not say any incivil words even to those who besmeared their swords with the blood of the innocent, records history.

The assertion that in Ayotollah's patriarchate, the dispensers of justice are above board, is nothing short of self-delusion. They are ordinary human beings cast in the mould of fallible men. The action taken by the *vali* on Bani Sadr's allegations against Hojjatolislam Sadegh Khalkhali, the 'hanging judge' of having accepted 400,000 dollars as bribe from a narcotic drug smuggler of Isfahan was to hasten the process of the President's removal.[11] But more revealing are the contents of an open letter from Ali Babani, one

time fellow traveller on Khumeni band-wagon, addresed to the Imam in the organ of the *NEAD* of August 12, 1982. Indicting Ayatollah Bihishti, the Chief Religious Judge of the Revolutionary Islamic Court, Babani writes, "late Ayatollah Bihisti spoke against the freedom of women in Hasniyeh Ershad and then millions of women came out in protest on the streets in Teheran. Is it not true that Bihishti felt relaxed in the company of European ladies and warmly shook hands with them" ?

Exporting Iranian Islamic Revolution

Let us now examine another area of glaring contradiction in the theory and practice of Ayatollah Khumeni regime. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran forbids interference in internal matters of other countries. The leaders of the IRI have repeatedly and publicly expressed their faith in this article of the Constitution. In a public meeting, reports the Islamic Republican Party *Weekly* of February/Mach 1912,[12] President Khameni said, "The principle of non-interference in the internal matters of other states has been adapted in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran". Again, addressing the 36th session of the U. N. General Assembly, Iranian Foreign Minister, Musavi said, "We assure the world that Islamic Republic dose not advocate indulgence in seditions or repulsive acts."[13] Non-interference in the internal matters of other countries is an internationally recognized code of conduct with all civilized countries today and Islamic Republic of Iran did well to embody it in the Constiution. Theoretically the policy is laudable but innumerable statements by responsible leaders including the Ayatollah himself, preaching uprisings and seditions in other countries are on record. There are confirmed reports of Ayatollah Khumeini coddling Nur Misuari, Chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front waging a Muslim secessionist rebellion in the Southern Philipines.[14] In a message on the assassination of President Sadaat of Egypt, Ayatollah Montezeri, a prominent religious leader urged the Egyptian army to disobey commanders, rise in revolt and join "people.[15] Removal of President Saddam Husain of Iraq has been laid down as a pre-condition to any negotiations with Iraq to bring and end to the Gulf war in

total disregard of the fact that the President has come to power through democratic means. Addressing a public meeting in Teheran this summer, Ayatollah Montezeri "urged the Jordanian intellectuals, writers and students to fulfil their Islamic duty in exposing the Jordanian government for its conspiracies against Iran through collusion with the U S."[16] There are evidences of IRI directly involved in fomenting trouble and disturbances in some of thc Gulf States, Kuwait and Bahrain in particular. In its issue of Nov. 1, 1982, *Teheran Times* reported that the Under Secretary of the Kuwait Foreign Ministry summoned the Iranian Ambassador and communicated the protest that, " Kuwait will under no circumstances permit the exploitation of religious occasions for rioting and political dissensions among citizens." As a measure to offset exploitation through Shia sentiments, the government of Kuwait imposed a ban on publication, buying, selling and reading of such fundamental Shia works as *Nehjul Balageh, Sahifeh-e Sajjadiyeh,* various interpretaions of Qur'an like *Majma'u'l-Bayan* of Shaykh Tabarasi, *Safi* of Mohsin Faiz, *Baizavi, Al Mizan* of 'Allama Tabatabai and *Miftahu'l-Janan* of Shaykh 'Abbas Qumi. Besides these, many works of prominent contemporary Shia *ulema* like Ayatollah Motahhari, Dr. Ali Shariati, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Sadr, Ayatollah Safi and 'Allama Kashfu'l-Ghita, too, have been banned. At the same time, the works of some Lebanese pan-Islamists and of 'Allama Mowdoodi of Pakistan have also bren banned.[17]

In October 1982, Bahrain rulers expressed their shock and resentment at an abortive coup engineercd by Iranian Shia dissidents under the leadership of one Hadi Mudarrasi, an Iranian zealot living in Bahrain. On Octobcr 24, 1 82 Prime Minister Khalifa of Bahrain stated, "the continual upheaval in Iran is a great danger."

In September 1982, *The Times* reported that the Islamic Republic of Iran had chosen Saudi Arabia as a target for ideological subversion.[19] The allusion was to the political domonstrations staged by Iranian Hajj pilgrims in the holy shrine of 'Kaaba. In his letter of protest sent to Ayatollah Khumeini regarding the

arrogant and 'un-Islamic behaviour' of Iranian pilgrims, King Khalid pointed out that, "the demonstrators approached the Hajar al-Aswad chanting these slogans: Allah-o Akbar, Allah-o Akbar, Khumeini Akbar, Allah wahid, Khumeini wahid (God is great, Khumeini is great, God is one, Khumeini is one). Such haughty demonstrations associated with some other unjustifiable assertions evoked aversion among other Hajj pilgrims. Nevertheless, release of Iranian demonstrators along with Iranian pilgrims who possessed narcotic drugs testifies to the goodwill of the Saudi regime. We, therefore, expect that your excellency would issue the respective decree to convince the Iranian pilgrims to avoid such actions and to concentrate on the holy rituals of Hajj."[20] To this Ayatolaih Khumeini sent a lengthy reply the contents of which are reminiscent of the letter sent by Caliph Omar to Yezdigard III, the last of the Sasanian kings of Iran who fell a victim to Arab invasion more then 1300 years ago. Its main body reads, "...... while Muslims have the life-giving teachings of the holy Qur'an which also, as the message of God, has religious and political orders inviting the Muslims to unity and warning against discord and dispersion, and while having a place of refuge such as the honorable *harams* which were centres for religious and political campaigns and which remained in existence so long after the Prophets, and all plans for Islamic expansion radiated from here, then why should the Muslims and Islamic governments acknowledge the interference in political and socio-political affairs at these honourable *harams* a crime just because of misunderstandings, conspiracies and vast propaganda of the super-powers."[21] Then furtheron in a direct attack on the Saudi regime, Ayatollah Khumeini concludes by saying, "If the government of Hejaz wish to benefit from the religio-political rituals which take place each year with the presence of millions of Muslims in our Islamic political manner, it would not then need Amerlca or its AWAC airplanes or other super powers." Incidently, the episode has brought to fore an ideological controversy of vital importance to contemporary Islamic thinkers, i.e. Is politics to be separated from religion ? Accordng to the Saudis it is.

Islamic Republic of Iran's inimical policy towards Israel

is well known. There is hardly a day when the Ayatollahs and the Hojjatol-Islams of Iran do not speak of marching on to Israel via Baghdad to 'destroy' Israel and 'liberate' Qods. *Jamhori Islami*, the official organ of the IRI in its issue of Mordad 2, 1361 (1982) reports, "Hojjatolislam Ya'qubi, the Friday Imam said, "Our Imam has taught our party that there is only one way of liberating Baitul Muqaddas (Jerusalem) and that is of trampling under foot all the international laws of the traitors."

Reports Islamic Republic *Weekly Bulletin*,[22] "The Supreme Defence Council of IRI approved on Saturday, January 30, 1982, the formation of the 'Golan Battalion' to be despatched to Syria. The battalion would be formed of Iraqi volunteers including POWS and Iraqi refugees who will be under the command of Syrian Government." Iran is a signatory to the Geneva Convention, it may be pointed out. Addressing a group of Shia and Sunni *ulema* in Qom, Ayatollah Montezari, a member of the Council of Guardians and the prospective successor to Ayatollah Khumeini said, "I urge our Muslim brothers in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Shiekhdoms, Afghanistan, the Philipines, Egypt and all over the world to be united for the sake of safeguarding Islam, and once they have done it, they will be capable of rubbing the super-powers in the dirt."[23] In Montezari's list of countries, Pakistan is conspicuous by her absence. The fact is that Montezari had taken the cue from the utterances of President Khamenei reported by the same bulletin in its preceding issue[24] that. "Islamic revolution would be complete when Islamic revolution achieved victory in other Muslim countries." He was speaking at a function held to commemorate the third anniversary of the revolution in Iran.

Pro-Khumeini activists are reported to have been indulging in subversive and anti-social propaganda in non-Islamic and secular countries with the abetment of Iranian government in a vain bid to arouse Shia fundamentalism among the minorities. Reports *Sunday Times*, London, in its issue of August 10, 1980, "There is now the evidence that the Consulate building in Kensington Court have been used as a diplomatic sanctuary by young thugs determined to suppress anti-Khumeini opposition in London ....Detectives are in-

vestigating reports that a group of Iranians was sent to this country to organise demonstrations and cause disruptions." The pro and anti-Khumeini demostrations by Iranian students at Aligarh Muslim University in India in June last resulting in the killing of one Shahram Mirani is not an isolated incident nor an insignificant one in the wake of the reports of presence of a member of Iranian diplomatic corps on the scene. The *Indian Expres* of June 20, 1982 came out with the comment, "there is an organised plan with the Khumeini government to export Iranian revolution. Such fanatics are very active in India."

The fantasy of export of revolution conceived by Ayatollah Khumeini reminds one of the story of the conceited Brahmin from South India told by Nehru in his *Glimpses of the World History*. The instances cited above should prove beyond doubt that there is no conformity between the theory and practice in Khumeini regime.

Freedom and Human Rights

The third area which can be identified as a glaring instance of contradiction in theory and practice of the regime in Iran is that of denial of freedom and human rights. Article 3 of the Manifesto of Islamic Republican Party, the ruling party of Iran, says :

"Guaranteeing basic freedom such as freedom of speech and of pen, freedom to assemble, and value-infusing human freedoms which are the necessary pre-requisites for the flowering of the capabilities and potentialities of the nation for fulfilling the creative role in shaping its social destiny."

Again, Article 22 of the Constitution of the IRI says. "Questioning of belief in any way is forbidden " Unfortunately what happens in Iran today is the reversal of this theory. Harrowing tales of atrocities perpetrated on political opponents, sections of minority community, non-conformists and democratic humanists are coming in every day. Acts of repression, torture, execution and incarceration are rampant, and justification is sought in invoking the laws serving the cause of 'true Islam'. A full description

of instances of blatant violation of the Constitution and Human Rights is to be found in the Report under the title '*At War with Humanity*' prepared by the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization. Among the acts of violation of constitution listed in the work are ruthless suppression of political opponents, execution by summary trials, tortures and brutalities on prisoners, violation of the UN Covenant on Human Rights, suppression of religious minorities particularly the Bahais and the Zoroastrians, curbs on press and punitive measures against those who refuse to be enlisted for war front.[25] According to the report of the Amnesty International based on the information from Iranian official sources, 4500 people have been executed by the Khumeini regime since 1979. But according to another report the number of the executed has crossed 15,000 and those in the prisons is nearly :0,000.[26] Many executions have taken place without trial or when no death sentence has been passed. Being aware of many instances of flagrant violation of human rights, detentions for indefinite period, tortures, decrees permitting execution of children and pregnant women, Amnesty International wrote a letter of concern to Ayatollah Khumeini, who, in the course of a public speech, came out with the retort, "You should be aware that all the Satanic powers and all the affiliates of the super-powers such as the Amnesty International Organizations have united to suffocate the Islamic Republic regime."[27] One wonders whether Ayatollah Khumeini has forgotten the role played by the same Amnesty International in exposing similar repressive deeds of Savak during the regime of the Shah.

The Guardian in its issue of July 20, 1982 carried the story of investigation by a committee of UN Commission for Human Rights on the reports of denial of human rights in Iran. Iran is a signatory to the UN Charter of Human Rights and UN Covenant but despite that the Iranian representative, Hojjotolislam Khosravshahi, disregarding even the recognized norms of protocol, sprung a surprise by asking the Committee in Geneva, "who on earth gave you the right to question me."[28] Reports *Teheran Times* of August 15, 1981; "upon verdicts of Islamic courts, terrorists were sentenced to death in Shiraz, Khorramabad, Uromiah, Isfahan,

Songhor, Lengerud, Zanjan and Teheran. Among the executed people were the sympathisers or people distributing literature against the government." If one keeps the track of Iranian dailies, one will be convinced that the whole land is a vast butchery and every morning the so-called Islamic judges of Islamic revolutionary courts have a pick at their political and ideological opponents and religious minorities. Much is being talked about *Qisas* or law of revenge in Islam to justify the acts of execution. In his open letter to Khumeini, already referred to in these pages, 'Ali Babani writes, "The police chief reported to Hazrat 'Ali that the son of Muljim has been fomenting ideas of sedition, and as such, permission be given to arrest him. The Imam declined permission saying that revenge before committing any crime even to the extent of simple detention is forbidden in our religion."[29] Again, here is what Munir, the retired Chief Justice of Pakistan has to say in this context. In his work *From Jinnah to Zia*, the distinguished jurist writes, "Punishment like cutting of right hand for theft, stonning to death for adultry, 80 lashes for drinking etc. as penalties are contrary to both the letter and spirit of Qur'an which regards repentence as a valid defence. Moreover, UN declaration of Human Rights and conventions on civil and political rights protect a person from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading acts."[30]

The *Weekly Bulletin* of the Islamic Republican Party of Iran in its special number of February/March 1982[31] reported that the *Majlis* supported Iran's proposal for the expulsion of the regime occupying Qods from the U.N. for "ignoring international and humanitarian principles" (according to Khumeini drawn by the affiliates of the Satanic powers). Is it not ludicrous that a regime which has executed thousands by summary trials, put nearly fifty thousand people in prisons, banned all political opposition, let loose a reign of terror through the notorious Local Guard Bases (*komiteh*), the dreaded armed guards (*pasdaran*) Code named 'Mehdi', strike force (*takavar*), the club-wielding God's Legions (*Hezbollahi*) cut-throats and the omnipresent Islamic Revolutionary Guards should now invoke the clauses of UN Declaration on

Human Rights etc. to deal with the regime of *Qods* The number of mobile units of *komiteh* in Teheran alone during the year has been estimated at 440 whereas during the days of the Shah, the Savak units in that city were not more than 80.[32] The number of 'SAVAKH' (*sazman-e amniyyat va ettehade Khumeini*) in Teheran today is several times larger than the number of SAVAK during the regime of the Shah. The Ayatollahs are orchesterating Islamic laws of reprisal. What is the crime of the poets, writers, intellectuals and literati, one may ask. Writes *Morning Star* of London in its issue of August 4, 1982, "Intellectuals like Shokrollah Paknejad and Saeed Sultanpur who had suffered during the regime of the Shah also have been executed by Khumeini regime." Twelve year old daughter of Dr. Radpur in Meshed was delivered 60 lashes—the Islamic punishment of the Ayatollahs—for wearing the ankle-high 'un-Islamic' dress. The poor child succumbed to torture [33] One hundred and seventy members of the British Parliament signed a memorandum expressing shock at the brutal repression of political and human rights in Iran.

On the eve of his return from France, Khumeini thanked the French people for "following the Iranian struggle for freedom of conscience".[34] Not to speak of his political opponents, did he allow the freedom of conscience to the members of his own sacerdotal group like Ayatollah Shariatmadari and Ayatollah Taleghani? Is there an Iranian today whose faith is not being questioned in his country?

Here is another instance of hollow cry for human rights. The *Weekly Bulletin* of Islamic Republican Party in its special number of February/March[35] reports, "Mahdavi Kani, Secretary General of Combatant Ulema Society of Islamic Republic of Iran met Mrs. Gandhi and told her to reconsider holding of the non-aligned summit in Baghdad. He also said equal rights for Muslims in India be given". One should have no difficulty in presuming what the Prime Minister of the world's largest secular democracy, composed of multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural humanity will have said by way of reply to this question of the representative of a theocratic regime in whose prisons are languishing nearly 50,000 political prisoners and in whose graveyards

are sleeping nearly 15,000 co-believers as victims to the cause of freedom and human rights. Reports *Asiaweek* of April 2, 1981, "The Muslim Iranians do not touch the Bahais because they feel Bahais are like dogs."

One of the charges brought against the late Shah was that of making service in army compulsory for able bodied youth before they were granted permission to enter a professional institute. The Islamic Republic of Iran has now enacted a law by virtue of which civic rights and comforts are denied to those who evade drafting. Article 66 of the bill stipulates the following punishment for them : (1) Deprivation of all facilities provided in Article 55 of the bill for those who get enlisted. (2) Deprivation from water, electricity, telephone and gas connections. (3) Deprivation from the freedom of travelling abroad including Hajj and even for medical treatment and declaring them as absconding from *jehad.*[36] A regime which claims that its people are all volunteers for Islamic Revolution and *jehad* need not enact such reactionary laws.

State Policy

One more area of sharp and irreconcilable contradiction between theory and practice in Khumeini regime is that of state policy. There are instances to prove the double standards adopted by the regime in regard to many national and international questions. Ayatollah Khumeini and his machinery accuse U.S. and Israel of supplying arms to the Mujahedin-e Khalq, the active opponents of the regime.[37] But he and his psychophants send their praises and blessings to the Afghan rebels who are thriving on the supply of arms and money from the imperialists. While Khumeini condemned Sadaat's action of curbing the activities of Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt, he sent two of the Majlis deputies namely Minuchehr Mantaqi and Sayyid Hasan Shabcheraghi to meet the Afghan rebel leaders in Pakistan to boost their morale.[38]

Not only that, in a lengthy article *Qods*, the official organ of the pro-Khumeini United Islamic Students Association in West Germany, in its issue No. 25 of January 1980 (page 12) writes under the caption 'What happens in Afghanistan', "..........The

leaders in Kremlin ought to know that the issue is not only of settling their score with the people of Afghanistan. The entire Islamic *umma* is determined to bring an end to their occupation of Afghanistan and to make in that land the graveyard of the expansionists and the incursionists. Not only that it (Islamic *umma*) is also determined to liberate the whole of the Soviet Muslim population from the clutches of these tyrants............"

In a number of his speeches, Ayaollah Khumeini said that martial law in any Muslim country is a means to suffocate Islam, but he has not a word in support of Al-Zulfiqar movement which wants to do away with the martial law and restore democracy in Pakistan. He castigates the Saudis for obtaining AWACs from the US but has no word, no message and no comment to offer the people of Pakistan for obtaining F-16 war planes from the US by their government. It is hoped that the injunction of *taqiya* will not be invoked in this particular instance.

For more than a year now, the rumours that Islamic Republic of Iran has been receiving military equipment from Isreal have been accumulating. Despite vehement denial by the Iranian government and the Ayatollah himself, the French journal ***Paris Match*** of August 1982 wrote that General Sheron of Israel admitted in an interview that Israel had been selling arms to Iran. The journal disclosed that the General had, much earlier than June 14, 1982, said that Iran was about to launch a counter-offensive for recapturing Khurramshahr. The *Herald Tribune* of April 29, 1982 uncovered a scandal of the sale of 50 US tanks to Iran at a cost of 49 million dollars through a London based Swiss-German multinational called BOTC Ltd. The story was confirmed by *The Sunday Times* of August 4, 1982 under the caption 'The mystery of the tanks that never were'. More guarded ***Christian Science Monitor*** of July 19, 1982 reported that Iran receives military equipment through Shatt al- Arab. And lastly the *NEAD* of August 13, 1982 wrote that the Islamic Republic of Iran had purchased US Phoenix missiles with 60 kms range at 500,000 dollars.

On the credit side

Let us examine what is there on the credit side. After the

revolution, the religio-political leadership of the country declared its intention to do away with Iran's political, economic, military and cultural dependence on the U S.A. As far as her foreign policy is concerned, "the onerous Iranian-US military treaty was nullified. Iran withdrew from the aggressive military CENTO bloc and joined the non-aligned movement. Political and economic relations were severed with the racist regimes of Israel and South Africa," writes Kianouri.[39] In its home policy, the leadership declared its intention to carry out reforms and measures for the destitute (*mustezefeen*). Some of the measures taken and extensively publicised[40] may be listed here ; establishment of full control over the extraction and marketing of the country's major wealth-oil-hitherto controlled by International Oil Consortium, nationalization of gas and power industries, nationalization of heavy industries and private banks and insurance companies. The *Soviet Review*[41] reports that 51 big and 600 medium sized enterprises were nationalized. By a government decree, the minimum wages of workers was increased from 217 rials to 567 rials (2.9 to 7.4 dollars) a day. The Ministry of Agriculture announced nationalization of big estates which belonged to the Shah and to the minions of his regime. *Teheran Times* of July 20. 1981 reported that 74 billion rials had been given as loans without interest to the destitute, most of them peasants.

All of these measures, no doubt, are in keeping with the declared policy of the theocratic regime. But as we see, the process of socio-economic changes ameliorating the lot of broad sections of Iranian working people was slowed down. Two reasons can be assigned. One is the industrial-financial bourgeoisie closely connected with international capital and the other is the rightist conservative clergy who had also staged an opposition to the Shah's 'White Revolution'.[42] Speaking at the four-day Reconstruction Struggle (*Jehad-e Sazandgi*) seminar in September 1981, Behzad Nabavi, the Deputy Minister ardently exhorted the Council of Guardians, the Majlis and the Cabinet to implement Clause C of the bill on land which sought limiting large-scale land ownership, requisition of the excessive land belonging to landlords without compensation and turning it over to the landless and land-

starved peasants. Despite the regime's promises, 540000 out of 2.5 million peasant families have absolutely no land and the peasant families which possess less than one hectare of land is about 735000.[43] Hence more than 50 per cent of the peasant families continue to be landless or land-starved even after more than three years of revolution.

Conclusion

In final analysis, we find that the slogans like Islamic revolution, Islamic laws and Islamic dispensations etc. may be only the levers to keep the Shia clergy in power for some time more. But in any state in modern times and in particular one that stands on the crossroad of East and West, international restraints and constraints have to be taken into cognizance. Oil wealth of the Gulf States has made them vulnerable to political, economic and cultural inroads which cannot be set aside by hysterical utterances and demogogic gimmicks.

Iran is a land of great and ancient civilization. She has contributed in a glorious way towards the advancement of human culture. The message of her great minds has served as beacon light to the humanity in its moments of darkness. Today Iran herself is threatened by forces of darkness and is groping for light. But this is not her first experience, for, she has had, like all great civilizations, her share of vicissitudes. The loss in terms of men and material is lamentable but the ray of hope is not altogether dead. How can a people go down whose sages and savants gave the message of universal brotherhood to mankind. Nearly eight hundred years ago, Sa'adi, the great humanist and the poet of the people sang in Shiraz :

Bani-adam a'za-e yak peykarand *ki dar afrinish ze yak jowhar and*
chu 'ozvi be-dard awrad rozgar *digar 'ozv-ha ra namanad qarar*

'Human beings are like the limbs of one body. In their essence they have been created of one matter. If any limb of the body suffers pain, how can other limbs rest and relax'.

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PART II

Central Asia

CONTENTS

Part II

Cultural Development of Soviet Central Asia—achievements and perspectives*

"On May 1, 1930 (seventeen months earlier than originally planned) work started on the railway linking Soviet Central Asia and Siberia. It was known as Turkisb (Turkmenian-Siberian) railway and ran 950 miles to link up Kazakhistan, Kirghizia and the Russian Federation. The local inhabitants along the new railway's route marvelled at the new machinery being used and the way navvies lived and worked. Old men seeing steam engines for the first time, were convinced that the Devil was turning the wheels"[1].

In 1921, Lenin wrote, "Look at the map of Russian Federation of Socialist Republics. To the north of Vologda, to the south-east of Rostov-on-Don and of Saratov, to the south of Orenburg and of Omsk, to the north of Tomsk, there are boundless areas big enough to contain scores of large civilized states. And over all these spaces patriarchalism, semi savagery and real savagery reign".

63 years have gone by since then. What do we find to the south of Orenburg today ? A modern civilization based on modern scientific and technological knowledge, a society thriving in material and spiritual freedom, on equality and fraternity. The socialist dream has come true.

Looking in retrospect, development of Central Asian society along socialist lines after October Revolution was an achievement about which many were sceptic. This was owing to the incredible backwardness of the region and the Herculean task that lay ahead. Factual inequality had become inextricable and there were no industries worth the name. What is more agriculture which could

* This paper was presented in a seminar organised by the Cultural Department of the Embassy of USSR in New Delhi in November 1984 in connection with the 60th anniversary of establishment of Soviet Central Asian Republics.

have played a significant role in the economic and cultural transformation of Central Asian society was primitive.

Ushering in of cultural revolution in an area ridden with conservatism, backwardness, narrow regionalism and linguistic prejudices was closely linked with two main tasks ; social industrialization and national-states delimitation. The reason why absolute majority of nations decided to remain within the boundaries of Soviet Russia is to be found in the principle of national self-determination set forth in the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People as a principle of national development in the Soviet state. Thus we find that the Declaration of Rights not only guaranteed the formerly oppressed nations' freedom of secession but also the right to free development in the event they did not want to secede. The Appeal of the Council of the Peoples' Commissars to the toiling Muslims of Russia and the East dated November 20, 1917 declared their national and cultural institutions free and inviolable with the guarantee to develop their life as they chose.

But the complexity of the problem brought to surface the need of national-state delimitation, a necessity inherent in the principle to which allusion has already been made. The principle underlying the national delimitation when studied in historical perspective, stemmed directly from the Bolshevik nationality policy itself. It was floated long before October Revolution but was begun to be implemented in 1924 only when historic conditions matured.[2] The policies pursued by the Soviet governments of Turkistan, Bukhara and Khiva as far back as 1923 prepared the ground for national delimitation by creating national divisions in accordance with the Party Congress resolution of 1923. With that was laid the basis for the Development of culture in all its spheres, language, literature, arts, press, education etc. of indigenous nationalities. In 1924 national state delimitation created conditions for speedy removal of economic and cultural backwardness of Soviet Central Asian nationalities by bringing people closer to administration. Narrow national friction which had bedeviled inter-national relationship for a long time was removed and the people of hitherto backward Central Asia were drawn into the historic task of building socialism.

Socialist industrialization was the real key to cultural revolution and transformation of the backward Central Asian society to a modern and socialist society. Barring a few attempts prior to 1929 to restore the Soviet Central Asian industries—of whatever description these be—to pre-civil war level, the real and systematic industrialization of the Soviet Central Asian Republics began with the Five-Year (and later on Seven-Year) Plans in 1929. The Fourteenth Congress of the Party in its directive for formulating the First Plan had pointed out that the Plan must give special attention to the question of the pace of economic and cultural development of the backward areas.[3] In fact the Five-Year Plans and later Seven-Year Plans of the Soviet Central Asian Republics were and are an organic part of the plan for the whole of the USSR. The first Five-Year Plan of Central Asia stressed on self-sufficiency in cotton for the textile industry of the USSR and the mineral wealth. The results obtaining today reflect the wisdom and far-sightedness of those who laid dowm the guide-lines regarding priorities in planning of Central Asia. Cotton production has contributed to a very large extent in bringing economic and cultural change in the Soviet Central Asia and has become a viable factor of development of Soviet economy. When the wheels of socialist industrialization of Soviet Central Asia were set in motion through well-considered plans, the result was that the rate of industrial development in these Republics became faster than in the Central regions. The second Five-Year Plan witnessed the completion of some gigantic projects in Central Asia like Chirchik Electro-Chemical Combine in Uzbek SSR Involvement of the broad masses of people in the region could be understood in the countrywide labour productivity movement like Stakhanovite movement in 1935. Two years later it was reported that nearly one half of the industrial workers in Uzbekistan had received one or other kind of technical training. By the end of the second Five Year Plan, oil production in Turkmenian SSR registered a rise 13 times more.

Today we are celebrating the 60th year of the foundation of Central Asian Republics of the USSR. The gigantic task of social industrialization of these Republics during the last sixty years has entirely changed the socio-economic map of the region. The people whose ancestors sixty years back had come out with armfuls of

straw to feed the car of French journalists[4] are now apace with the most industrialized societies of the world. A recent study has revealed that people in these Republics today spend more on industrial goods than on food.

Yet one more decisive factor in socio-cultural transformation of the Central Asian Republics is the collectivisation of agriculture. The concept did not only mean eradication of feudalism, or collectivisation of millions of small individual holdings. It meant many more things. There was acute scarcity of water and fertilizers. There was need for agronomists and engineers. It meant construction of thousands of kilometers of canals, scores of bunds and reservoirs, establishing of fertilizer plants, and above all the most needed iron-plough, the tractor. The significance which the tractor had, not only for Central Asian Republics but also for the Soviet Union as a whole, is reflected in placing the first ever made tractor as a relic in a museum in Moscow. The number of tractors employed in Soviet Central Asian Republics in 1970 was over 23 lakhs.

The task of industrialization of the Central Asian Republics of the USSR in the early stages of Soviet Union's history was of a magnitude which could not have been fulfilled in a historically brief period without the fraternal assistance of the more advanced Russian people Assistance to these republics came in different and in all ways—financially, technically and culturally – all through the process of socialist construction. For instance in the case of Turkmen and Tajik SSRs, subsidies from the Central budget averaged more than 50 and 80 per cent respectively. Central Asian Republics were given material assistance in the shape of the services of the professionals and technocrats and technical and agricultural equipment.

This, therefore, was the infra-structure which had to be provided if culture was to be developed along socialist line. It has rightly been said that cultural revolution is the nodal point of the Soviet programme for social change and economic development. Since cultural development touched the very roots of the problem, it had to be taken up in its totality. It meant so many things particularly in a region where there was mass iliteracy, where women were denied freedom and due share in social development and where opportunities for development of artistic faculties were

blocked. Hence the tasks of paramount importance towards cultural development were eradication of illiteracy among adults, education for children, creation of modern public health system, scientific and technological development, promotion of arts, emancipation of women and creation of a national intelligentsia. Cultural revolution in the Central Asian Republics of the USSR implied a scientific outlook and approach and the process of fostering socialist ideology. It certainly did not mean rejection of preceding cultures in their totality, but in fact meant assimilation of its finer and positive elements in the new socialist frame of a scientific world-outlook. The real hurdle in the path of cultural revolution in Soviet Central Asia was neither the paucity of means, nor men nor will to make sacrifices. It was the resistance from reactionaries, the feudalists and the bourgeois nationalists. Their fiercest attacks were launched against women education and women emancipation, change of script from Arabic to Latin and then more scientific Russian. How could these reactionaries be made to understand that releasing women from isolation, confinement and illiteracy meant galvanizing half of the population into productive activity.

The first solid step to set in motion a natural revolution in Turkistan was taken as far back as 1920 when Lenin signed a decree establishing the Turkistan State University. A large group of highly qualified teachers, scientists and engineers arrived in Tashkent and with that began the task of preparing qualified national cadres for the whole of Soviet Asia. Training of teachers, opening new schools, publication of newspapers and establishing of literacy circles began on a wide scale throughout the length and breadth of the region, and by 1930 *Kultpokhod* or mass campaign to eliminate illiteracy gained momentum. Thus in Turkmenian SSR, for instance, in 1937 half a million people out of a population of 1.2 million were attending schools. Illiteracy was liquidated in these Republics as far back as 1940 and along with that had also started move towards higher and advanced education and research. Today each Republic boasts of an elaborate high-level Academy of Sciences, several universities, hundreds of professional colleges and

institutions, thousands of students and teachers. Prior to revolution the percentage of literates in Soviet Central Asia was just three.

Emancipation of women did not mean only giving them rights on paper or relieving them of veils or just admitting them to educational institutions. The socialist system aimed at drawing them into social production and to make them share with men, as highly concientious citizens, the political power in a proletarian state. By doing creative work they were to become the builders of society. In 1930 ten-year old Yagdar had not been attending school. When a boarding school was opened in the Ferghana Valley, she became one of its first pupils. One day when the girl came to visit her mother, the local *mullah* and her step-father forbade her to see her family. Her mother's tears were of no avail. After leaving school, Yagdar by then a Komsomol member entered the Tashkent Rail Transport institute. This Uzbek girl who had never worn a *Yashmak*, was to become a republican champion runner in the 500 and 1,500 metres events, and to appear at international meets. After leaving the institute she worked as an engineer, building railway lines and bridges. It was this same Yagdar Nasiriddinova who was later to become President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan.[8] *Likbez* or eradication of illiteracy had become part of Soviet history. In early seventees in Uzbek SSR more than 157 women were Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of USSR.

The Constitution of the USSR guarantees development of all local languages and cultures in regard to nationalities. But it is a fact that Russian language has played an important role in the cultural development of Central Asians. It became the means of communication between the nationalities on the one hand and on the other it unfolded upon them the treasures of modern scientific knowledge. The bilingual system is one of the major achievements of the socialist system. The widespread use of Russian language has been a voluntary effort and did not in any way undermine the importance and utility of local languages. The system has rather strengthened the process of national integration. Translations of great Soviet writers, poets and thinkers have been made available in

the form of translations in respective languages thus enriching the level of knowledge and awareness of people in Central Asian region.

History of education in Soviet Central Asia has many interesting facts to reveal. Let us take the case of the Kirghizia SSR. Prior to revolution the people of Kirghizia had no written language at all. Now this SSR has its own university, a women's padagogical institute, five teachers colleges and 30 technical schools. In Soviet Republics, including Central Asian Republics, there are in all 14 universities and Academy of Science one in each. The Academy of Sciences of Kazakh SSR, for instance, has 31 academicians, 30 corresponding members, 88 Doctors of Science, 500 candidates of science, 160 graduate students and more than 700 science graduates.

A significant progress has been made in mass education on which the socialist ideology lays great emphasis. Today in the Republics of Soviet Central Asia, there are thousands of theatres and museums, thousands of public libraries, cinema halls and clubs and more than three hundred newspapers with 60% of them in national languages.

Great advances on the cultural front were visible in Soviet art and literature of which the Central Asian Republics had their due share. This differed fundamentally from what had preceded. Lenin had seen the main objective of cultural revolution to be the transformation of the nations' culture into something genuinely popular in the broadest sense of that term. Under this interpretation of cultural advancement, a new generation of writers, poets, actors and musicians, painters and sculptors, film-makers and journalists was growing up. The distinctive feature of their work is its profound affinity with the people, its active involvement with their everyday concerns. The objectivity and social content of creative activity of intellectuals and artists of post-revolution period is adequately reflected in a little anecdote connected with the great leap which Soviet cinematography had made. In 1929, the team that had made the great film *Battleship Potemkin* visited the United States during which Charlie Chaplin asked them what they were

visiting America for. The Co-Director of the film, Grigory Alexandrov, was rather taken aback by the question and muttered that they had come to see how films were made in America. At that the great Chaplin replied, "Films are made in Moscow, it is money that people make here".

The emergence of national intelligentsia accupies the key position in the development of literature and literary trends in the Republics of Soviet Central Asia. The transition of intellectuals like Hamza, Aini and Zouqi from enlightened democrats to active supporters of Bolshevik rule and their struggle against bourgeois nationalism marked the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of literary activities in the region. The new literature was radically different from the old one in its themes, motives and forms of expression. On this front also progressive forces had to face resiṣtance from the traditionalists called Chaghataists, and the phenomena was not altogether unexpected. But with the abolition of exploiting classes, socialist realism had its way. Aibak in Uzbekistan and Aini in Tajikistan laid the firm foundations of socialist trends in literature. But it must not be assumed that in adopting new themes, forms and trends, rich classical traditions have been underrated. Much of the classical literary wealth has been given a new lease of life.

Literature and art in Soviet Central Asian Republics received new impetus under socialist transformation. Its powerful content and artistic interpretation of realities of life have received worldwide recognition. All branches of literature developed through scores of celebrated intellectuals in Central Asia like Aini, Tursunzadeh, Peru, Mir Shakar, Kanoat and others in Tajikistan, Chingiz Aitmatov in Kirghizia, Hamza, Aibak, Gafur Gulyam and others in Uzbekistan, Kerbabaev, Daryaev, Ata Kaushutov and others in Turkmenia and scores of many others.

Along with local classical background and tradition, literature in these Republics accepted the influences of Russian classics, and Soviet Central Asian literature, therefore, has a wide canvas and social content representing the unadorned aspects of life, socialist life, its present achievements and future aspirations. It has true

universal content, a broad-based humanistic view, fraternity and peace being the very corner stones of that view.

The socialist content of literary and artistic creativity of the Central Asian Republics of the USSR, in keeping pace with similar endeavours in the rest of the country, responded enthusiastically to the needs and aspirations of the people as the situation developed. Be it the post revolution formulative process or the struggle against Fascism and Nazism, Central Asian intelligentsia came out to defend the new religion of man, the religion of democracy and socialism. It had given ample proof of its dynamism.

The big problem with which progressive movements in general and Central Asian intelligentsia in particular are confronted is the relentless effort of the imperialists, neo-colonialists and reactionories to disrupt world peace and create areas of tension and thereby usher in a process of destabilisation. Today there is threat to the very existence of man and all he has built. There are forces threatening and pressurising weaker nations particularly of the Third World. In the close proximity of the Central Asian Republics of the USSR, most sophisticated weapons are being piled up and brigandist activities are abetted. In the name of containment of Soviet Union, military bases are being formed and weapons are given to those who need them not. This is the problem, this is the threat. Therefore, the foremost thing to which attention of the writers, poets and thinkers needs to be drawn today is to awaken the world opinion against this militarism. It is to strengthen forces of peace and progress and forge strength and solidarity among those who have faith in freedom, equality and fraternity of mankind.

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Nationality Question-Socialist approach and relevance*

In a peoples' struggle for independence, national question is generally relegated to the background. But when a crisis situation arises in a given society, national contradictions are among the first to come to the surface. This is the law of history and a general cause of the exacerbation of national question. The specific cause can be explained by the presence of objective conditions for emergence of national contradictions. We know that the East was once the cradle of ancient civilizations. Hene existed slave-owning despotic rule as well as acute forms of feudalism in a vast multi-national and multi-racial empires. Then most of the countries in Asia and North Africa were subjected to colonial expansion by European capitalist countries almost simultaneously. By a strange coincidence, disintegration of the colonial system of Western imperialism took place at the same time throughout the East.

The national question which has been brought sharply into focus in the newly freed Asio-African countrises has, in many cases, become their central problem because a natianal conflict can attain serious dimension generating unhealthy effects on the future of society and social progress. That is why the newly freed countries must pay their attention to the solution of this question, which has, apart from its universal phenomena, some local characteristics as well. The main cause of present exacerbation of the national question in Eastern countries lies primarily in socio-economic and socio-political features of the present period of history. It will not be safe to belittle the rule of social and economic factors in the matter of national situation and then

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dispose off the case by speaking of the "age of nationalism" and "diffusion of national ideas."[1]

To elucidate the point, it may be recalled that inspite of the best efforts made by the Soviet authorities, national feuds and frictions continued to linger in Turkestan, Bukhara and Khwarazm in early days of socialist formulation.[2] The Uzbeks constituted the dominant nationality in all the three republics then. They possessed the bulk of fertile lands and trade and industry monopoly. But Uzbek motives were always suspect in the eyes of other national groups who, in the past, had suffered under the oppressive rule of Uzbek *Khans* and *Amirs*, and had been exploited by their landlords and merchants. International friction adopted extremely threatening posture, so much so that at All-Union Central Executive Committee meeting on 24 October 1924, the Turkmen delegate, Atabaev, alleged that the first Revolutionary Government of Khwarazm headed by the 'Uzbek bourgeoisie' had practised a sort of 'massacre of St Bartholomew' on the Turkmen population. He stated that more than one thousand Turkmens were done to death in a single night. The Turkmen retaliated by pillaging Uzbek villages and massacring Uzbek peasants and families. In doing this they were reported to have done more than fulfilled the quota set: ten Uzbeks for every one Turkmen.[3] This is just an example to show the extent to which national friction can drift.

But the Bolsheviks were seized of the question of nationalities in Russia and its full dimensions. In the context of national-state delimitation programme based on historical laws and socio-economic realities, the reactionaries and the imperialists characterised the step as "a counter-weight to the efforts made by the Muslim communists of Turkestan"[4] or "manifestation of the old imperialistic principle of divide and rule."[5] Hugh Seton-Watson went to the extent of writing that "in the national delimitation, there was a clear purpose to create a number of different nations, which could be kept apart from each other, played off against each other, and linked individually with the Russian nation."[6] Perhaps such writers and others of their breed forget that the

national question had received full attention of the Marxists much before the national struggle for liberation in Russia began. It distinctly figured in the resolution of London International Congress in 1896,[7] and point 9 of the programme of the Russian Marxists dealt with the matter at full length. The entire question centered round the concept of the right of nationalities to self-determination. As such, it had become necessary for Lenin to express himself on it fully and exhaustively. A suitable opportunity of discharging that responsibility was provided when there appeared in 1908-09 the long Polish article of Rosa Luxemburg under the title "The National Question and Autonomy." The result was Lenin's masterly exposition in "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination."[8] His concept of 'self-determination' found concrete expression in the Declaration of the Rights of the peoples of Russia, only a week after the October armed uprising, which proclaimed the basic principles of the Soviet nationalities policy, namely, right of the peoples of Russia to free self determination, independent states, abolition of all forms of national and national-religious privileges and the free development of the national minorities and ethnic groups inhabiting Russia. Lenin expressed his profound faith in diverse federations of free nations grouping themselves around revolutionary Russia, a federation which he called invincible and which would grow without "the help of lies or bayonets."[9]

The Right of Self-Determination

The right to self-determination which is at the core of nationality question, fully conformed to the principle of proletarian internationalism and international solidarity of the working people. The most significant aspect of Leninist concept is the freedom of nationalities to secede because, in his own words "without freedom of secession there can be no freedom of accession, nor genuine unity between the nations."[10] An in-depth historical presentation of nationality question, at last, brought to surface the most crucial point, namely whether the answer to the question of secession of a constituting nation through a national movement is a categoric yes or no? This was precisely the

question to which Rosa Luxemburg had sought an answer long back.[11]

Let us try to understand why in socialist theory, outright support is being given to the right of self-determination or precisely to the right to secede. In other words let us see why the bourgeoisie would not agree to secession or in their own words to the 'disintegration of the State.' The economic basis of national movements is the truth that the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, must have politically united territory with a population speaking the same language. All obstacles to the development of that language have to be removed and it must find consolidation in its literature. Unity of language is the most important condition for free commercial intercourse on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism.[12] Hence what follows is that a national movement tends towards the formation of national state because the requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied under a national state. Consequently there is a denial of the right of secession.

The meaning of the concept of self-determination, from a socialist standpoint, has to be understood through an understanding of historical and economic conditions of the national movements. From that point of view, it is incorrect to understand the right to self- determination to mean anything but the right to separate state existence. Lenin was very clear on the question of the motive behind a national struggle, and he evaluated it from the angle of class struggle of the workers. The bourgeoisie push the aims of its nation before the aims of the development of proletarian class. The proletarians, on the other hand, recognizing equality and an equal right to a national state, value above all the alliance of the proletarians of all nationals and evaluates every national demand, and national separation from the angle of class struggle of the workers. Since the proletarians are opposed to state and national privileges for which the bourgeoisie make a struggle, they must support the right of a nation to self-determination including and up to secession. Marx declared that "no nation can be free if it oppresses others."[13]

A national bourgeoisie movement should be understood in the wake of two clear trends which generally is the phenomena today. One trend is directed against national oppression and this, Lenin declared, should be supported by the proletarians. But there is also the other trend which works towards "national exclusiveness" and this had to be fought tooth and nail. The *Jadidist* movement may be cited as an instance of how a heterogeneous group was swayed between Pan-Islamism, Pan-Turkism and their own bourgeois nationalism.[14] Thus a categoric 'yes' or 'no' to a secessionist demand of a nation was inseparable from the trend which such a movement had taken.[15] Repudiating the arguments of opponents to the right of secession (like Kokoshkin) who said that recognition of this right would increase the danger of disintegration of the state, Lenin asserted that "from the viewpoint of democracy in general......recognition of the right to secession reduces the danger of the disintegration of the state." Not only that. The programme adopted by the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU in 1961 reiterated the principle of self-determination as one of the basic principles of the foreign policy of the Socialist countries, and stressed "the recognition of the right of every people to solve all the problems of their country by themselves" as an important condition for the peaceful co-existence of States with different social Systems.[16]

History has proved that free and voluntary association of heterogeneous groups of nationalities into a federal structure on the basis of equality, fraternity and sovereignty, as envisaged in the great Declation of Rights of 1917, has resulted in their rapid social, economic, cultural and spiritul advancement. The republics of the Soviet East have not demanded secession from the Union because of their high level of political consciousness, developed culture and because of the great economic benefits accruing to them from their close fraternal ties on the basis of equality with other constituting units.

Significance of Soviet Experience

The solution of nationality question in Soviet Union had

significant international repercussions. It evoked response in Afro-Asian world and caused serious concern to imperialism and the reactionary feudal-clerical and right-wing forces. The solution of national question in the Soviet Union passed through several stages: granting of the right of self-determination in the state-legal aspect, national-state delimitation, and the establishment of union and autonomous republics particulary in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The democratic method of implementing self-determination had no precedent in the world history.[17]

The triumph of the socialist revolution in Russia and the socio-coultural transformation of the once backward Central Asia in particular, has had direct impact on the peoples and countries of the East. The first impact was the appearance of national movements to liberate themselves from colonial yoke. This was the first step not only to solve social problems but also to settle problems among different national groups within the country. Secondly the national problems in pre-revolutionary Russian empire had much in common with various nations in Asia. Their solution in a socialist society provided a fund of experience for the liberated countries. It must be remembered that Russia has been not only an European but also an Asian power incorporating many people who are close and kindred to other people of Asia in their ethnic, language and religious aspects. The Soviet revolution delivered them all from colonial subjugation and their right of self-determination was juridically implemented shortly after the revolution.

The third impact of socialist experience in the Soviet Central Asian nationality question has to be traced in the principle of proletarian internationalism. Socialist Russia rendered direct aid to the people of the East in solving their national-colonial question. In the beginning only the neighbours of Soviet Russia received the aid, but with the all-round growth and strengthening of the Union, the scope of the aid was widened and has now become extensive in the Third World.

With the declaration of rights of the people, there appeared the next to impossible task of removing inequality among different peoples of the Soviet Central Asia in the spheres of economic, social and cultural advancement. Evening out the levels of development by upgrading their levels in the multi-national Soviet East was, in theory and in practice, quite different from the capitalist West's concept of the fromal legal equality of the nations. Juridical equality of the peoples and nations confined to the boundaries of one state mav be of some positive significance in a limited sense, but does not solve the nationality question in its entirety. The socialist system helped in overcoming the backwardness of the Eastern regions of the country. By 1930s, socialism in the Soviet East ensured rapid development of economy, social relations, scientific and technological advancement and above all development of indigenous cultural life. Today the devopment level in Soviet Central Asia is not only upto the UN criteria, but even higher in certain respects. Let us take the example of the Uzbekistan SS:[18]

UN. Criteria	Highly developed countries	Under-developed countries	Uzbek SSR
Per capita national income	700	60	680-700
Daily food consumption calories	3,1400	1,850	3000-3200
No. of literate persons per thousand	980	135	981
No. of doctors per thousand	102	8	142
Average life expectancy	65	35	65-67

Figures and data are sometimes boring. We may ignore them. But let us confine ourselves to the formulation of principal determining features basic to the question of nationalities in the Soviet Union with particular reference to the Soviet East, the

solution of which, in the words of Leonid Brezhnev, has been "settled completely, finally and for good."[19]

1. The national policy of the Party and the government has a clearly defined class character. It is pursued in the interest of the working peoples as a whole. This leads to the profoundly democratic nature of the change carried out in the sphere of national development. The lesson East may learn of solving nationality question in socialist way is there for anybody to consider.

2. The key principle underlying the relations between the Union Republics and autonomous republics of the Soviet Union is division of labour and economic cooperation determined by the objective potential of a particular republic and the national (USSR) interests. The purely economic advantages offered by the division of labour in a country with historically established and stable connections are beyond doubt. This was practically demonstrated at the time of Tashkent earthquake disaster some years back.

From this principle the lesson which the people in the East may like to learn about the Soviet experience is that there is the vital need to overcome parochial and national seclusion and strive for socialist division of labour and mutual assistance. Thus there is the need for integration based on the principles of genuine internationalism and ruling out all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

3. Bolshevisation and Sovietization of the people in the Soviet East has not resulted in their absorption or assimmilation by the Russians. Flourishing of national cultures has been exhibited by the preservation of valuable old traditions; the obsolete having being rejected of course. Contrary to all slanderous inventions by the reactionaries, Soviet national policy has seen the rebirth of many of the peoples of former Russian empire.

The lesson which the Third World countries could learn from

Soviet experience in Central Asia is that scientific socialism and its progressive policies stimulate national forms of existence of ethnic communities and provide conditions for the development and advancement of nations and their cultures. Fifty years after the solution of this most complex problem, a new historical community—the Soviet people—has been created.[20] The Socialist revolution of the question has ushered a new phenomena of social relationship among the nationalities in the Soviet East, namely the phenomena of migrations, mixed marriages, bi-lingualism etc. The formation of the Soviet people as a historical community has exerted beneficial influence on the countries of the East beyond the borders of the USSR. This influence may be felt in broad social terms, and more specifically in the sphere of national policy. There are, no doubt, some objective difficulties before the emerging countries which are exploited by their ideological opponents.

National Movements

Perhaps it may not be too unsafe to state that national question has not been fully resolved in the developing countries of the Afro-Asian world. The only way of overcoming antagonism in national relations is through effecting fundamental changes in the entire socio-economic and political structure of society. This is possible only when exploitation from production relations is eliminated. In order to evaluate the national movements in the East, the main question to be asked is "In the interests of which class and social groups is the national struggle being waged?" Broadly speaking there can be three kinds of national movements:

A tribal and feudal separatist movement with components which are extremely backward culturally and are still in a pre-capitalist stage cannot be called a national movement. The tribal movements in Southern Iran, for instance (Qashqais, Bakhtiaris etc.), is a typical example. These movements can often be inspired by imperialist elements. The so-called 'White Revolution' of the late Shah was in fact an attempt to "reduce the social base of the feudal separatist national particularism".[21] However one thing should not be lost sight of: the logical reaction

to all oppression on national grounds to which they are subjected by the ruling classes of the dominant nation of a given country.

Then there are the bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie-democratic movements. In this category the movements reflect relatively high level of national development. In this context India is a typical example. National movements in India have reached the point of maturity reflecting an attempt to solve the national question in a bourgeois democratic spirit. The first and important step in that spirit towards the solution of national question in India was the administrative-territorial reform of 1956 based mainly on linguistic principle. But the fact is that though these linguistic states were the recepients of formal equal rights stipulated in the Indian federal system, still the post—1956 movements of greater autonomy for the states, a phenomena which has not died down are distinguished by deep socio-class and national content connected with the specific features of capitalist development in India. The complexion of the wealthy Indian bourgeoisie is to be determined in terms of its composition in which caste, nationality and religion play significant role. The sections of this Indian bourgeoisie are composed principally of people from trading and money-lending caste and religious communities of Northern and North Western India. Their business concerns are spread on an all-India scale. In fact this section draws its commercial strength from the influential groups in the ruling section of Indian National Congress, a historically influential political party. The groups in the ruling section to which we refer also consist mainly of Hindi speaking states, U.P. in particular. These states are, by and large, the exponents of an anti-autonomist, great power chauvinist tendency in the political and idealogical life of the country. A glaring proof of this situation is to be found in the recent statements of the Chief Minister of Haryana in propounding the theory of Greater Punjab by a process of amalgamation of three northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal.[22]

Evidently this situation is bound to accentuate reaction in a way that friction deepens almost spontaneously. The petty and middle bourgeoisie in the non-Hindi speaking states, feeling that

they are locked in a competition struggle with the wealthy bourgeoisie, try to consolidate their economic and political position by asking for autonomy of the states. Again the struggle of the parties in the states which sometimes adopt an extreme nationalist position (DMK and Telugu Desam) is mainly to defend the growing national production represented mostly by small capitalist undertakings and handicraft industries and against the domination of big capitalist concerns and monopolies.

We have recently been hearing much about the conversion of the Union of India into a unitary state. Nationalists in the states would naturally feel perturbed over such an idea as it would mean centralisation in the financial-economic field.

Hence what we find today regarding national movements in India are the economic interests of the petty hourgeoisie and the middle bourgroisie which are at a disadvantage in comparison to the stronger bourgeoisie of Northern and North Western states. But at the same time the new sections of the national bourgeoisie in India have made their position stronger by evincing interest in All-India market and consolidating their position in the administration at the Centre and the state levels. Therefore none of the state parties raises the question of sharp curtailment of the authority of various central bodies. It will be interesting to note that DMK, which in 1957 proclaimed as its aim the struggle for independent Dravidnad (four south Indian states), waging a war against the so called 'North Indian Imperialism'. reversed its stand subsequently when it came to power in 1967 in Tamilnadu. Onwards, its eforts were relegated to Tamil and Dravidian problems only.

However the relatively progressive content of the bourgeoisie national movements in contemporary India should not be ignored. Different sections of national bourgeoisie have at least and so far retained their democratic potential and aim of removing the actual inequality of the Indian nations and people more in the social and political than in the economic sphere. The language problem

which caused friction between the Hindi speaking regions and the non-Hindi speaking regions in sixties leading to a confrontation between democratic and chauvinistic, anti-democratic trends in national policy has been amicably resolved by a compromise formula to allow English to continue as second state language. This compromise reflects the strengthening of democratic approaches in the solution of national-linguistic question. This trend indicates that there is greater realization of national cultural autonomy for Indian nat'ons constituted in linguistic states in India today.

Thus an overall picture available in India today is that national movements are developing along two lines, the centralist and the autonomous. The states where Congress is not in power are trying to unite in their effort to gain larger autonomy, and the Centralists backed by wealthy bourgeoisie sections see in it a sinister move. But the federal system obtaining in India has made steady progress in trying to solve the national question in correlation to the level of economic and socio-political development of Indian society. Notwithstanding the danger from the right and the intrigues of the imperialists or impossibility of reaching a solution of the national question under capitalism as a matter of principle, in India today conditions have matured for progressive evolution of national relations. Some measures taken by the government like restricting the influence of monopoly capital, or rooting out the survivals of feudalism, or adopting anti-imperialist course in her policy (NAM being a proof) may be some of the indicators. In India, a measure of autonomy has already been achieved by nationalities and nations and the struggle is for consolidation.

The third kind is that of revolutionary-democratic national movement. Such movements are distinguished by their deep social base and democratism. Only feudal-clerical are outside the pale of the movement. It is closely linked up with the implementation of urgent social change. In this regard the Kurdish movement is a typical example which has to be distinguished from the tribal movements in the same country-Iran. It is initially a movement for agrarian reform demanding eradication of feudal survivals.

But in the forefront is the struggle for self-determination and national liberation. The Demonratic Party of Kurdistan (Iraq) was a typically revolutionary-democratic party working in cooperation with the progressive and democratic forces in Iraq and elsewhere.[23]

These are the trends of national movements in the East at present. The Marxist-Leninist attitude towards these movements is lucidly explained by Lenin ;" Unreserved recognition of the struggle for freedom of self-determination does not at all oblige us to support every demand for national self-determination".[24]

In summing up, it may be said that the solution of nationality question in Soviet Central Asia or elsewhere in the Soviet Union is the logical result of the concept of proletarian internationalism in which nations, acting on the basis of equality and fraternity are united together out of their free will. The goal before them is the construction of a new society, a socialist society, a society based on true social justice. The concrete goal of most of the national movements in the East today is autonomy. At the movement, in case where necessary internal and external conditions for complete self-determination are absent, broad autonomy for national minorities, based on democratic principles and presupposing basic changes in the socio-economic and political situation, is the most realistic path bringing nearer the solution of national question in Asian and African countries. This path has stood the test of time in Soviet East.

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Abul-Qāsim Lāhūtī-the Proletarian Persian/Tajik Poet

The period of Lahuti's literary creativity fills the years between 1904 and 1954. From historical point of view, this period witnessed many crucial events of human history. Any intellectual who lived a socially conscientious life in the said period could not afford to forget the untold sufferings and miseries which befell mankind during the two catestrophic world wars. By the year 1954, the aftermath of the Second World War generally called 'cold war' in the terminology of international politics and diplomacy, defeated almost all efforts of disarmament and stabilization of international peace. Failure of the League of Nations, and its replacement by yet another organization with fundamentally the identical purposes, had begun to be looked upon with much doubt. The impact of the role of the imperialists in shaping and moulding the future of mankind according to their own concepts and objectives had now crystallised in their manner and method of wooing, befriending, patronizing and when need arose, in intimidating smaller and under-developed countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was evident now that spheres of influence had begun to be carved out, economic constraints of the regions of their influence taken into consideration, and the facade of aid-trade to be set up in a way so as to be compatible with their long term exploiatative policies and interests around the globe.

On the local plane, the Persian-Tajik speaking region, by which we mean modern Iran, Afghanistan, Tajik SSR and parts of the Soviet Central Asian Republics bordering on these countries, witnessed a tremendous change in societies which had been bogged down by prolonged socio-economic stagnation. During the closing years of the 19th and the early years of the 20th century, these societies, influenced by the developments taking place around them found themselves drawn into a struggle for realization of their democratic rights so as to join the suppressed masses all over the

globe who rose against their exploiters. There was awakening among them for recognition of their identity. The tide was bound to erode the shores far deeper than one might have imagined. There is the need to analyse and elucidate the role of intellectuals like Lāhūtī, in awakening the downtrodden masses in general so that they could wrest their rights from their exploiters. Looking in retrospect, one is justified in saying that the mission for which this great proletarian poet stood has been partially realized and the fact remains that his message has not become outdated as long as oppression and exploitation in many parts of the world, particularly in African, Asian and Latin American continents are not fully eradicated. It is a procrastinated struggle no doubt but Lāhūtī's message is resounding as strongly as ever.

A brief recapitulation of socio-economic cum political situation in Iran, the birth place of Lahuti towards the closing years of the 19th century and onwards, should give us a clue to the thought formulation process of this poet. The doors of Iranian market had been flung open upon the influx of goods and large scale investment of the British and French capitalists as far back as the days of arbitrary treaties of Napoleon, and the first reaction resulting from social and economic discontent and spearheaded by an anti-feudalist wave was discernible in the years between 1848 and 1862.

Suppression of Babis, obstruction to agrarian reforms of Mirza Taghi Khan in mid 19th century, and the Anglo-Iranian war of 1856-57 tightened the grip of the British and Czarist imperialism on Iran, and she became a rich colony of both the powers. One after another, public institutions in Iran passed into the hands of foreigners. The departments of customs and communication had already been leased out to the Belgians in 1898. The feudalist structure, entrenched tenaciously, had become the bulwark of the colonialists and imperialists. Iranian provincial authorities, particularly the governors, had become pawns in the hands of the imperialists and their dictatorial manner of functioning had received the seal of approval from their foreign masters. The story of unbridled extortion by the provincial machinery has been vividly

told by Ahmad Kasravi in his monumental work.[1] Sayyid 'Ali Jamālzādeh, too, has in his work *Ganj-e Shāigān* very ably brought to light the Iranian feudal structure and its role in strengthening the hands of the foreign exploiters and local phychophants. The condition of Iranian peasantry, and in particular the landless peasants who formed nearly eighty per cent of her total population, has been recounted by Nazru'l-Islam Kirmāni in his admirable work *Trikh-e Bidari-e Iranian*. By the beginning of the 20th century, polarisation process in Iranian society had set in. The monarchy had found its supporters among the feudalists, the landlords, the high ranking personalities in the bureaucracy and military organization. Against this entrenched segment, stood the broad masses of the people, the workers in formation, the urban have-nots, the destitute artisans and the merchant class that had to face the ruthless competition of foreign investors. In this group may be included the liberal landlords and a section of Iranian clergy as well.

The movement for constitutionalism in Iran began in 1905 but despite many sacrifices made by the defenders of a constitutional monarchy, the system did not appear to be destined to grow. The years between 1905 and 1921, the year when the Qājār rule came to an end, are fraught with unprecedented political activities in which moves and counter moves of absolutism versus democracy and constitutionalism, or in other words, forces of reaction versus progress, tried to overtake one another. When the Constitutional Movement gained momentum in 1907 as a result of full participation by the peasants and workers in Iran, the big bourgeoisie, the leading clergy and liberal land-owners became alarmed. Peasant revolts took place in towns like Māku, Ṭālish, Gīlān, Qūchān and parts of Isfahān. The British had already landed their naval troops in the Persian Gulf in 1906 and had been actively conspiring with reactionaries like Shaykh Khaz'il and Qawwamu'l-Mulk Shirāzī. The increasing influence and presence of Germany in Iran and the Near East at this point of time brought the British and Czarist imperialists closer to one another. In August 1907, these two powers concluded a pact between them-

selves in which Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet were divided into their spheres of influence.[2] The treaty strengthened the hands of reactionaries in Iran, and Liakhov, the Czarist commander of the Cossacks Brigade in Iran, stormed the Majlis in 1907. The revolutionaries were forced to shift the centre of their liberation struggle to Tabriz where Colonel Sattār Khān guided and led it successfully. It was here that Lāhūti came into physical contact with the revolutionaries.

The entire political scenario in Iran during the period under consideration could be divided into three broad sections with forces pulling in their respective directions. These are the monarchy and its elaborate feudalistic set up, the proletariat and lastly the liberals drawn from the agriculturisists, the merchant class and the intellectuals. The monarchists and feudalists found a strong support from the imperialists and the colonialists; the proletarian class was in the process of formation and the bourgeois vacillated between the two. However, the nationalist sentiment did find occasional expression in the bazaar and among the liberal clergy. The revolt of Sattar Khān in the first decade of the 20th century followed by other uprisings, had a great deal of nationalist temper. These uprisings were intensified by the growing imperialist interference in Iranian affairs. In 1911, the Morgan Shuster mission heralded the beginning of US active interference in Iran. The mission established close contact with leading feudalists and reactionaries like Bagram Khan and the Bakhtiaris. In October of the same year, the British troops were stationed in southern Iran whereas the Czarist troops were to be seen in the north and the purpose of doing so was to crush the nationalist uprising in Iran. In 1915, Lenin said that nine tenth of Iran had turned into a colony.[3]

The great October Revolution of 1917 ushered in a new era in the freedom struggles of suppressed and exploited peoples in the Asian continent particularly those bordering the Russian territories. In November 1917, the Advisory Council of Peoples Comissar in Moscow issued a declaration in which relations of the

Soviet Union with its Muslim nationalities and Muslim countries on the basis of Leninist principles were reiterated. According to Lenin's note of 1918 and a formal declaration of the Soviet Government in 1919,[4] the Soviet government unilaterally nullified all such treaties of the Czarist regime with Iran as were exploitative in nature and detrimental to Iranian interest.

The Soviet government wrote off all the loans which the Czarist government had extended to Iran, returned her assets, handed over the roads, bridges, installations and factories without accepting any remuneration from Iranian government. This was an unprecedented gesture of goodwill on the part of so powerful a neighbour. This friendly policy on the part of the Soviet Union was in perfect conformity with its announced ideology and foreign policy. To the working people of Iran who had always equated the British colonial sm with the Czarist imperialism, the policy of the Soviet government was a total reversal of old relationship. It was a reality difficult to believe.

Growth and strengthening of progressive forces in Iran and their articulation in subsequent years was a natural corollary to the Russian Revolution of 1917. In Gīlīān, the Jungle Party accelerated its activities. Social Democrats of Northern Iran formed the 'Adālat Party in which Iranian emigrants to Baku took active part The Azerbaijan Democratic Party also was formed. But noteworthy among these nationalist movements was that of Khayābānī in Tabriz in 1920.[5] The Tudeh Party of Iran, which had already been formed as the strongest organ of progressive forces in that country and with which Lahuti was now closely associated began to widen its sphere of influence. On the other hand, colonialists and imperialists staked their interest in Iran either for her oil wealth or as a bulwark against the ever expanding influence of the new religion of communism, of progressive forces and of age of modern science and technology.

Lāhūtī with many others of his partymen was exiled to Turkey where he continued to serve through his pen the cause of freedom, human rights and human dignity of the down-trodden masses.

Lāhūtī was uncompromising in his ideology. In Iran, Reza Shah Pahlavi's autocratic regime had no tolerance for criticism and upheld no sanctity for the constitution, if there was one. Persecution of progressive forces was so unremitting that Lāhūtī was constrained to spend the rest of his life in the Soviet Union. The Sa'dābād Treaty of 1937 was a clear indication that Reza had succumbed to the threats and intimidations of the Anglo-American block and Anglophile wing of Iranian bureaucracy. However, Lāhūtī never lost touch with the crisis that developed in the political life of Iran during the last days of Raza Shah and World War II. In fact he kept track of things in Iran till the last day of his life, and through his poems, he continued to convey his message to his compatriots, particularly the younger generation to rise and overthrow the foreign yokc and be the masters of their destiny. The execution of Mirzada Eshghi in 1924, imprisonment of Bahār in 1932 and the execution of Farrukhi Yezdi in 1939 caused him deep distress and he gave expression to his grief very forcefully in his several poems.[6]

These were, in general, the complexities of Iranian political scene with which Lāhūtī was confronted during his life time. Proletarian poetry in Iran neither begins nor ends with Lāhūtī. But the fact remains that Lāhūtī's deep involvement in the destiny of mankind made him an outright revolutionary. He spurned compromises, despised conciliation and espoused the role of force for realization of a truly socialist and classless society. Though he does not preach a complete break off with the past, yet he signifies the remarkable and decisive role which the proletarian power based on scientific knowledge and principles of fraternity has to play in shaping the destiny of mankind. He speaks of means of production, of factories, of workers, their unions their institutions, of collective forms and mineral wealth, of female education and their rights, of fraternity among various peoples and nationalities, of equal distribution of wealth, of a promise of future and guarantee of present, of ultimate triumph of the workers and peasants as the back-bone of all means of production, etc. These are the main themes of Lāhūtī's poems.

Perhaps these terms may be characterized as jargons of communist ideology. Jargons they are and Lāhūtī is frank and fearless in making use of them However, his art of communicating his ideas has its own special technique and beauty.

Lāhūtī's favourite way of expressing ideas is through anecdotes and parables. For instance we may consider his poem entitled *Ādam-e Āhan pā Istalinabad*[7] (The Iron-footed Man of Stalinabad). It is a beautiful forthright poem in which a hedgehog exhorts a snake to come out in the open and not be afraid of him. But the snake excuses himslef saying that there is a rumour of an iron-footed man roaming about the place and crushing reptiles under its heel. He makes roads in mountains, jungles and deserts. The reptile says that the poor Tajik was a born-destitute but of late he had gained some strange power and had become a new man whose head touched the heights of sky in knowledge but his feet are cast in iron, round and rotating.

This is an obvious allusion to the strength and knowledge of a socialist state, and its industrial strength.

The forging of unity of hearts among various nationalities in Soviet Central Asia is indeed a major achievement of the Soviet system. For ages, the Tajiks and Turks, the Turkmans and the Karakalpaks, the Azerbaijanis and the Caucasians were torn by mutual strife and antagonism. Mediaeval history is replete with such painful stories. Not only that, the age-old and even legendry hatred between the Turks and the Persian/Tajiks had been accepted something like an unchangeable phenomena. But our poet feels elated in witnessing a new pattern of relationship developing between the people of different nationalities The new pattern assures social justice and equality and great opportunites for the development of their respective cultures. Lāhūtī hopes that the example of the people of Soviet Central Asia will be emulated and followed by others as well.

Lāhūtī's dynamism is reflected in his verses. His life has witnessed two epochs diametrically opposed to one another; the

mediaeval feudalist set up and the emergence of a progressive socialist society. He has been a witness to the process of transition and also the fruits of transformation. Therefore he has one eye constantly fixed on the oppressive and exploitative times and the other on the vast possibilities and potentialities hidden in the masses of people once they are released from the forces of darkness like illiteracy, backwardness and ignorance. Like Sadru'd-Din 'Aini, another revolutionary Tajik writer, he saw the ushering in of a new era in human history, a phenomena in which he was himself an active participant. He has his own way of giving expression to that historic change. He is sharp, subtle and pungent at one and same time. This could be better understood by citing three of his poems. In the first poem bearing the caption *Hekāyat az khar wa az tractor* (The story of a donkey and a tractor).[8] Lāhūtī explains with the help of a satire the manner in which the feudalists perpetrated exploitation of poor peasants.

On the arrival of a feudal lord to Kirmānshāhān, the poor peasants are ordered to arrange supplies of fodder, fruit, mutton, milk products and many other eatables. They bring it in large quantities, and as they had to stay back for the night, they are asked to sleep in the stable with horses and donkeys. One of the poor peasants who had been recently relieved of his donkey by a feudalist, saw it standing among the beasts and shouted that it was his donkey. The preposterous owner of he donkey staked his own claim to the beast and asked him that in order to prove his ownership, the peasant should produce the pack-saddle to see if it fitted the back of the donkey. The poor peasant had to walk a day's journey to and fro, carrying the pack-saddle on his back. Having fitted it on his donkey, the cut-throat mounted the beast and moved away to his house pouring abuses on the poor peasant for making him wait for the full day for the pack-saddle.

The second phase of the struggle for liberation and the period of transition in which the people had to undergo untold sufferings and privations, finds expression in a representative poem entitled *wofa ba ahd* (Keeping the promise)[9]. The idea conveyed in this

poem reaches the depths of heart and leaves profound impact on the reader. It speaks of human despairs, miseries, oppressions, hopes and undaunted courage to fight for freedom. An old and emaciated woman, with a loaf hidden in her loin cloth, walks up to the grave of his son killed in the struggle for liberation of his country. She places the loaf on the grave saying, "My child, I had made a promise that if at all I am able to procure a loaf, I shall give it to you. Here I have found it and I bring it for you in fulfilment of my promise".

Speaking of the fruits of revolution to woman in Tajikistan and other Soviet Central Asian Republics, Lāhūtī says that removal of veil and providing education to them are initially the largest gains of October Revolution.

The fourth phase of Lāhūtī's creativity is concerned primarily with the struggle against Hitlerism and Fascism. This is with particular reference to World War II. Like all rational beings, Lāhūtī is distressed to see the enormous waste of material resources and man power in a war thrust on humanity by the Hitlerites. This is what he conveys to the defenders of Leningrad (*be mudafe'ān-e Leningrad*).[10] The Turkmens, Tajiks, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Jamhuls, people of all nationalities in the Soviet Central Asia are solidly behind the historic defenders of Leningrad.

The entire concept of Lahuti in regard to the ultimate objective of socialist civilization is the creation and stabilization of true human fraternity. The uplift of man in material and spiritual terms is the goal. This has been set forth in an excellent poem entitled *Buzurgi-e be zawāl* (Immortal greatness).[11] An old man hugs his parting son and wishes him to return when he has become a great man. He comes back after a year and tells his father that he has come back a rich man. But the father disagrees saying that he had wanted greatness not riches. The son goes back and returns to his father after many years. He tells his father that he had returned a great man because he had acquired a great deal of knowledge. But the father is not satisfied. Knowledge is not greatness, he contends. The son goes back

and returns to his father after many years along with another fellow being. He tells his father that his companion was a prisoner, he had heard his agonising wails and, therefore, struggled for his liberation. He had secured his freedom and brought him a free man along with himself. Then the father blossomed like a flower and said, "You have fulfilled my ambition. This is the real and immortal greatness".

The contribution made by the Soviet Central Asian writers towards the development of human civilization was ably summed up by the late Saeed Nafici of Iran while addressing the Second Congress of Soviet writers. He said :

"For us in particular, a study of the path adopting which the Soviet Central Asian Republics, who are historically so close to us, have been able to develop their culture in so short a period is instructive. Their literary works are an excellent model for young genertion to understand how a real democratic civilization can be brought into existence".

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Central Asian Society in Avicenna's Times

The period between the latter part of the 10th and the first half of the 11th century synchronises with the life span of Abu 'Ali Ibn Sina. During this period and around, the vast geographical region of Central Asia in which his career was cast, witnessed as many as 24 big or small ruling houses and principalities. It was an epoch for any brave soldier to seize on the opportunity and carve out a little kingdom for himself. Of these, four were more prominent than the rest. These were the Samanids of Bukhara, the Saffarids of Siestan, the Buwayhids of Isfahan and the Ghaznavids of Ghazna. Ibn Sina was born (A.D. 980) and brought up in the kingdom of the Samanids (A.D. 849—1004); associated himself with their court, benefited from their library and moulded his intellectual life and personality in their society. Not for this reason alone but more particularly for the royal and noble lineage of the Samanids, the vastness of their empire, the strength of their government and lastly their unique service to cultural advancement do we choose to confine out study to the society of Transoxiana under the Samanids. But this does not mean that we preclude the cultural importance of other contemporary prominent houses already mentioned. For instance, we know that the latter part of Ibn Sina's life was spent in Isfahan and that was as productive and fruitful a period as the one spent in Bukhara.

The Samanid kingdom extended from the outer fringes of the steppes in the north to the waters of Persian Gulf in the south; from the shores of the Caspian in the west to the slopes of the Thien Shien in the east. But the sphere of influence of their court extended much beyond the frontiers of the kingdom, and had certainly been palpable in Baghdad, the seat of the Caliph. Bukhara, the fabulous capital city of Transoxiana, occupied from early times, a commercially advantageous position. Here, in the past, used to meet travellers and traders, connoisseurs of art and

1. This paper was persented by the author in the Ibn Sina Millenary Seminar organised by the INSA at New Delhi in Oct. 1981.

men of letters from east and from west; men of diverse nationalities, the Greeks, Alexandrians, Byzentians, Chinese, Indians, Arabs and Persians. There was an excellent opportunity of assimilation and diffusion of ideas. Synthesisation of ideas must naturally have taken place and has been reflected at several occasions in the history of mediaeval Central Asia. Indeed these manifestations enriched the life and made valuable contribution to the process of upgrading human civilization.

Ibn Sina was born in A.D. 980, and by then, Islam had been in Central Asia for nearly three centuries. As the new religion was getting assimilated into the life culture of a nomadic people who had been weighed down by the Zoroastrian religious hierarchical system, new socio-economic and socio-religious problems began to appear. The Ash'arites or the followers of Abul Hasan 'Ali Ash'ari (d. 984) were opposed to the tenets of the Mu'tazila and endeavoured to establish the true religion through dogma. They were known for their aversion and opposition to liberal thought and philosophy, especially of the Greeks. The most popular sect at the time in Transoxiana was that of Abu Mansur Matridi of Samarqand (d. *cir*. A.D, 943) called Matridis They were also dogmatists and broached no favour with the Shu'ubiyeh. The Mu'tazila who had, hitherto, increased numerically in eastern Iran and Transoxiana, were now on a steady decline as the Ash'arites accelerated their open hostility towards them. The adherents of *ithna Ash'ara*, the Zeydis and the Isma'ilis were fewer than the Hanafites and the Shafi'is whereas the number of the Hanbalites and the Malikites was far less.

From contemporary history we learn of the practice of some groups of people to distinguish their members and votaries by the use of a dress of a particular colour or description, a distinction made primarily on political and ideological basis. For instance, the followers of al-Muqanna'clad themselves in white, and were called *Sefid Jamgan* or *Mubayyaḍa*. In Tabaristan, some bore a red standard, and hence, were called *Surkh 'Alamana*. A group was called *Musawwida* for clading itself in black, and those who wore red were called *Muḥammirạ*.

Some of the sects, we are told, had instituted trusts to which their members made monetary contributions. In this respect, the Isma'ilis were more active and this practice is perhaps carried on by them even today. The Behafridis had directed their followers to contribute one seventh of their holdings towards the works of public utility. Some religious and social groups had formed secret societies ; for instance those of the Sufis called *Halqa-e Sufiyan*, and those of the inmates of a Khanqah called the *Khanqahiyan*. The most influential and effective of these secret societies was that of the *Ikhwan us-Safa* who had reached the height of their success during the youth of Ibn Sina. The Isma'ilis usually met and propagated secretly and for any stranger access to their circles was not possible unless he was formally initiated into it. Perhaps the Europeans in the mediaeval times had borrowed the idea or the mode from them.

The intellectual movements often culminated in powerful uprisings in Transoxiana and Iran and with no mean a result. The uprisings of the Behafridis in Khurasan, of al-Muqanna' in Transoxiana, of 'Abdallah bin Rawandeh in Baghdad, of Mazayar in Tabaristan, of Khurramdinan in 'Iraq, of Babak in Azerbaijan, of Jawandmardan in Khurasan, of 'Ayyaran in Siestan, of Hamza, of Ustadsis, of Ishaq-e Turk in Transoxiana and lastly of Sanbad in Khurasan, are in no case unimportant events if the cultural history of the region is sought to be reconstructed. In the days of Ibn Sina, many of these uprisings of the people had assumed and formulated their full cultural dimension. By the time Hasan b. Sabah assumed the leadership of his cohorts, the Isma'ilis of Iran had gained three hundred years of experience of open as well as secrect resistance to political and intellectual determinism.

From very early times, and more particularly during the Sasanian regime, class distinction was the bane of Iranian society as also with some more societies of mediaeval times. In a mediaeval feudal system, the tillers of land usually remained deprived of the rights of ownership. The rise of Islam might have initially brought some hope to the economically oppressed people because

the new religion promised social justice. But realities are bitter and social justice presupposed economic freedom. The Arab occupation proved disenchanting because the Central Asian people, like other non-Arabs, found it difficult to reconcile to the status of a second rate citizens of Islamic world. They had to reassert. This led to wave after wave of discontent articulating through socio-religious movements like those of the Shu'ubiyeh, Carmathians, Behafridis, Khurramdinan, Sefid Jamgan and others.

The class structure and the agrarian and tax system under the Samanids in Transoxiana and Khurasan were the continuation of Sasanian system. The class structure of four estates remained as it was as we are told by Nasiru'd-Din Tusi in *Akhlaq-e Nasiri*. The words like *vizir* and *diwan* (bureau), though foreign in origin continued to be used in the revenue records of the Muslims as in the Zoroastrians.

Yet one more factor contributing to class and feudal ramification was the system which supported the Caliphate in Baghdad. The Turks of Central Asia, after the occupation of their land by the Arabs and their conversion to Islam, formed the military wing of that society, whereas trade, commerce, pursuit of science and learning and peaceful occupations fell to the share of the Iranophile wing. The Caliphs inducted the Western Turks into their military service—the body guard, but had to replace them as soon as they became threateningly powerful. The Samanids could neither resist a similar temptation of raising a body-guard nor could neglect the Eastern Turks, especially the Uighurs who were always present behind the walls of their kingdom. The structure of the so-called Turkic-slave aristocracy shall have to be taken into account while discussing the class structure of those times. These slave-generals gradually rose to high positions and wielded enormous power and influence posing serious threat to several noble ruling houses in the region. Many of these houses like the Chaghanian, the Semjurian, the House of Mikal, the Mamuniya of Khwarazm etc. made attempts to contain these slave generals and even clashed with them occasionally as in the case of the struggle between Mahmud of Ghazna and Mamun b. Mamun of

Khwarazm. Many of these noble houses showed unmistakeable leaning towards the Shu'ubiyeh and this is the reason why, after the collapse of the Samanids, Ibn Sina chose to go to the court of the Mamuni princes of Khwarazm, and later to that of the Zeyarids of Gurgan, Buwayhids of Rey and finally to Isfahan.

In Samanid Bukhara, teaching of rational sciences also formed the curriculum in the *madrasahs* or colleges along with religious sciences like tradition, dogma, divinity and exegesis of the Qur'ān. Among the rational sciences, Greek sciences like logic, philosophy and arithmatic were foremost. Reputed professors would deliver lectures and occasionally assembled the students in their own houses. In case a proposition remained unexplained or uncomprehended, it was referred to a scholar of repute at whatever distance he was and his opinion was sought on it. The booksellers in big towns were generally literate. If a scholar placed with them order for a particular volume, the bookseller would produce one for him either in his own handwriting or through a scribe who was a professional called *warraq*.

Most of the professors delivered lectures publicly by mounting a platform. Sometimes a student would take exact notes of the lecture delivered. He was called *amili* or *majalis*. The writers as well as public-men sometimes dictated their biographies or historical events to their students or subordinates and such writings were called *Maqamat*. The secretaries and well-known authors would often keep with them the copies of letters sent to different people and then would compile them in a volume. The volume containing copies of letters written to friends was called *ikhwaniyat* and the one containing letters written on behalf of the ruler or the governing authority was called *sultaniyeh* and when brought up together, these would be called *rasail*.

From contemporary historical works and chronicles, we can draw a long list of libraries which flourished in different parts of the empire. These, for instance, were the library of the Samanids in Bukhara, the library of Madraseh-e Ghazna, the Sabuniyan library at Nishapur, the Buwayhid library at Rey, the library of Sahib b. 'Abbad at Rey, the Jame'u'l-Akbar library at Merv, the

Kakuyeh library at Isfahan, the Khujandian library at Isfahan and the rest. With the details of the libraries that existed in Iran and in Transcaspia outside the pale of the Samanid kingdom, we are not concerned here.

In the period under consideration, we find that men of letters had to adopt some profession to earn a living unless they happened to be petty land-holders (*dehqan*). The only section among them to receive stipend was the teachers in the *maktabs*. But when a particular college in any leading town developed into a full-fledged institution, the professors associated with it would receive their salaries from its trust. The professors sometimes employed assistants to reproduce their lectures. They were called *moids*. The learned scholars and professors invariably kept themselves away from politiking and from seeking court-favours. In the case of Ibn Sina, it has been specifically said that he was first among the *hukama* (philosophers) who associated himelf with the royal court. This kind of favour-seeking and acceptance of service of the court was considered degradation for a scholar and intellectual of repute. But in the case of Ibn Sina, the point to be remembered is that it was his medical profession which brought him to the court of the Samanids and of Daylemites.

From the histories of the period we learn that Transoxiana under the Samanids generally fared better in terms of economic conditions of its people. The reason was that the mainland of the kingdom lay on the highway of trade and commerce between the east and the west. The ancient silk route in Samanid times originated in the borders of Kashghar, and passing through Mawara-an-Nahr and Khurasan, reached Baghdad and onwards to Asia Minor and then to Southern Europe. The Eastern Turks carried on their trade with the northern states through Khwarazm and Central Asia and this was sufficiently established when Samanid coins were found in the Scandinavian countries. But the description of the section of people benefiting from trade, their socio-economio status and their relations with the people involved with productive activity, remains an interesting field of investigation.

Despite all this, general condition of the masses of the people during the period shall have to be understood keeping in view the totality of circumstances, i.e. the feudal system, the *dehqans* and group allegiances, and more particularly, in the context of the role of the Islamic religious hierarchs of Baghdad. We should try to understand the situation in which such powerful Transoxianian and Iranian ruling houses as those of the Buwayhids and the Seljuqs have had to seek the Caliph's recognition despite the fact that the Caliph himself owed his existence and position to them. The role of the clergy who drew inspiration from the seat of the Caliphate cannot be underestimated. It was through their instrumentality that allegations of *ilhad* (atheism) and *zandaqa* (heresy) were levelled and decrees issued against the Shu'ubiyeh, the Carmathians, the Mu'tazila and the like. These people, considered the bitterest enemies of the Caliphate, were not spared in any case. We know that Abu 'Ali Hasnk b. 'Abbas Mikal Hasnak, the able vizir of the Ghaznavids, was branded as a heretic for having visited the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt, a known Isma'ili, while on a pilgrimage to Mecca. The Caliph of Baghdad finally saw him executed.

The intellengentsia of the day, conscious of the existing non-liberal atmoshphere, would seek refuge in one of the three compartments of intellectual pursuit i.e. religion, philosophy and mysticism. Some of them who were engaged in religious pursuits, also occasionally cared for Greek philosophy and mysticsm. We find that some of the outstanding intellectuals attempted at a synthesis of either religion and philosophy like Khwaja Nasiru'd-Din Tusi (notwithstanding the fact that he occupied an official seat) and Fakhr Razi, or of philosophy and mysticism like Ibn Sina and Afzal Kashani, or lastly of religion and mysticism like al-Ghazali.

The ruling machinery, however, was alert to any show of strength by a group of people or a region of the kingdom. Nothing was spared to suppress an uprising wherever its signs appeared. The formation of guilds in broad sense of the term, like society of the sufis (*halqa-e dervishan*) or the inmates of the seminaries called '*khanqahiyan*', the unions of the Shu'ubiyeh or of the

'*jawanmardan*' were manifestations of resistance to the authoritarian system. We also learn that people of various trades did sometimes form guilds called *mutaharafah* and chose one among themselves as the leader. Even occasionally the soldiers of a particular locality formed their unions, sometimes clashing with a similar group They were called *junada* and *mutajaned.* However, the exact nature of the activities of these unions and the extent of their participation in and support of some popular uprisings remains to be thoroughly investigated.

During Ibn Sina's days, liberal thinking was still practised. Under Nasr b. Ahmad's rule, the Isma'ilis had been openly and fervently propagating their doctrine in Bukhara and other towns to the extent that they had succeeded in drawing to their fold Rudaki, the influential poet-laureate and the father of Tajik poetry. The practice of the Isma'ilis was to approach the people rather than the ruler, his courtiers or the nobles. This is the reason why they produced most of their works in Persian/Tajik. In order to uuderstand clearly the intellectual atmosphere from which Ibn Sina drew inspiration in the development of his thought, one must study the history of the Isma'ilis of Transoxiana and Iran thoroughly besides other things. That appears to me the real key to understanding the times of Ibn Sina.

The Nuqtavis

The Nuqtavis or the Pasikhani (s) were the followers of one Mahmud Pasikhani Gilani. Pasikhan is a village to the west of Rasht in Gilan district, Iran. Mahmud Pasikhani apparently founded the religious sect of Nuqtavis in A.H. 800, during the hey days of Amir Timur. He was a follower of Sayyid Fazl Naimi Astarabadi, a notable Hurufi. This Sayyid Fazl was the son of Abu Muhammad Tabrizi, the founder of the Hurufi sect. He earned his livelihood by stitching night-caps, and, after extensive travels in Iran, Iraq and Arabia, he began to preach his faith in about A.H. 788. As his influence increased, his followers steadily swelled in number throughout Iran. Sayyid Fazl Naimi interpreted the Qur'ān after his own ingenuous brain laying exclusive stress on the originality of the alphabet (*huruf*). He emphasised the need of comprehending the deeper and mysterious meaning of the alphabet if one wished to arrive at the underlying meaning of the utterances of the prophets. He claimed to have succeeded in arriving at the hidden and hitherto unknown meaning of the Qur'ānic verses and the sayings of the Prophet of Islam through the *hurufi* method. Thus he came to be called Fazl-e Hurufi, and his followers as Hurufis.

According to the author of *al Zu'l-Lum'e*[1], Sayyid Fazl had extended invitation to Timur to join his sect but only to meet consequences which ultimately ended up in his execution--the decree having received ratification of the *ulema* of Samarqand. Under Timur's orders, his son Miran Shah beheaded the Sayyid near Tabriz. The dead body was tied to a rope-end and dragged along in the streets of the city and, later on, it was brought before Timur along with the severed head and was burnt to ashes.

Reverting to Mahmud Pasikhani, we are told that for reasons of disobedience and overborne ego, he was expelled by his master and came to be called 'Mahmud-e matrud wa mardud'—Mahmud, the outlaw and the condemned.[2] He is reported to have stood fast to his convictions and abstained from taking a wife. Having

spent some portion of his life around the towns on the banks of Aras in the then northern Iran, he put an end to his life in A.H. 831 by pouring acid on his body. Although nothing more than this is known of his life or of his followers, yet this much may be said with certainty that his mission propspered fairly well during the 9th and 10th centuries of Hijra (16th and 17th century A.D.), and he was able to rally round himself a considerable number of followers not only in Iran but in India and Asia Minor as well.[3]

The Nuqtavis deduced the nomenclature of their sect from Mahmud's conception of earth being a *nuqta* (the point) of all creation. Any member of the sect not subjecting himself to matrimony was called *Wāhid*—the unit, and one taking a wife was *Amīn*—the trustee.

Like his master, Mahmud, too, claimed himself as 'The Promised Mehdi'. He asserted that Islam had outlived its days and the era of the Arabs had come to an end. Henceforth it was his religion that had to gain currency and the era was that of Iran. This cycle, he said, would last eight thousand years.[4]

The followers of Mahmud came to be known as Pasikhanian or Mahmudiyyeh. The Muslims considered them heretics because they refused to believe in God, resurrection, heaven, hell and the hereafter. They believed that the reward or punishement of virtue or vice respectively was not deferred to the hereafter but was made operative in this very world. They held in high praise the Perfect or the Ideal Man—*Murakkabe Mubin*. They added that what was called God till that time was, in truth, this very Ideal Man. Such a stream of thinking made the Nuqtavis high libertines in the sense that they did not find themselves bound to customs and tenets. They had no reservations about drinking and sex and, as reported equally by their defenders as well as antagonists, they uttered such statements as were considered sacrelige and off the path of *Shria*.[5]

The Nuqtavis were also called *Tanasukhiyyeh*—the believers in transmigration of soul. They said that whatever has a shape or form in the material world, the particles that go in its composi-

tion, shall remain for ever, adopting different shapes like a stone, a blade of grass, an animal, a human being etc. From form, action and nature of a particular object of creation, we can recall the shape and action of that object in its past life. This faculty of retrospective comprehension was called *ahsa* and one gifted with the faculty was a *Mohsi*.[6]

The author of *Nafāisu'l-Arqām*,[7] throwing some light on the beliefs of the Nuqtavis, says that they deny God, arguing that as long as one does not 'realise oneself, one is subservient, but having realised the self, one becomes God'. Their *kelima* is *laillah ilal Murakkabu'l-Mubin*—there is no God but the Perfect Man. They further believe that there is no being that is not compound and sense-oriented. They regard intellect and reason as fallacious.

After Mahmud's death, the Pasikhanis spread out in Iran and propagated their faith with zeal. Contemporary historians of Iran speak of their accelerated activities in Kashan, Natanz and especially in Fin. A fair number of writers and poets of these parts of Iran declared their adherence to the faith brought by Mahmud.

The first adverse reaction of the contemporary Iranian Government appeared during the reign of Shah Tahmāsp Safavi the contemporary of Humayun. Under instructions of that ruler, a large number of the inhabitants of Ajudan was sacked by Amir Khan Mawslo, the Governor of Hamadan. *Tarikh-i Alfi* records the events of the year A.H. 982 as follows.[8]

"A large number of people in Ajudān and Kāshān joined hands with one Murad who claimed to be the Imam. Yet another group rallied round one Mahmud Fasakhani (Pasikhani) who went a step ahead and proclaimed himself a prophet. Shah Tahmāsp despatched Amir Khan Mawslo to Ajudan and my father Badi'u'z-Zaman, was ordered to move towards Kashan. The troops of both the commanders made a swoop and captured many of those (nuqtavi) people and sent the captives to the capital. A large booty which these people had received as

presents from the *vilayats*-countries of Sindh, Keej and Makran, was also captured and sent to the royal court."

In the town of Qazvin, a group of Nuqtavis was cast into prison under the orders of the Shah. One among them was Hayati, the poet of Kashan. This poor fellow had to spend two years in prison before he could manage—and that too only after the death of the ruler—to flee to India where he entered the services of Jehangir.

After Shah Tahmāsp's death, his successors were involved in internal dissensions and in counteracting the ever-penetrating influence of the Ottomans in Azerbaijan. This provided an opportunity to the Nuqtavis to step up their propagational activities. They gained influence and even interfered in the matter of a struggle for the throne between Shah Mahmud and Walijan Khan Turkman. Two prominent Nuqtavis, namely Afzal Dotari and Mir Beghami, lost their lives in the struggle.

Shah 'Abbās I was a fanatic Shia and a ruthless autocrat who would tolerate neither a political opponent nor a religious deviator. He hunted down the Nuqtavis in their strongholds. One of their notables, Mir Sayyid Ahmad Kashi alias Pir Ahmad was smitten to death by Shah 'Abbās with his own sword. Among his writings, many letters and documents fell in the hands of the officials and these revealed the names of Pir Ahmad's accomplices. Most of them were done away with except the poet and calligraphist Mulla Muhammad Baqer Khordeh of Kashan who, according to the recordings in *Ma'āthir-e Rahīmī*[9] and *'Arafātu'l 'Āshiqin*[10], managed to flee to the Deccan in India after undergoing two years term in the Kashan prison, and in the custody of Āsif Jah, the brother of the author of *Ma'āṭhir-e Rahīmī*. Even several Qizlbash chiefs who had been largely instrumental in upholding the Safavi regime, nay, the very props of their throne, were lured to the faith of the Nuqtavis. One of them was Bodagh Begdin Ogly Estajaloo, a disciple of the powerful Nuqtavi named Dervish Khosrov. In A.H. 1010 (A.D. 1662), Shah Ābbās I undertook a journey on foot from Isfahan to Meshed in token of

redemption of his earlier pledge During this journey, he ordered that two of his camp followers be beheaded as they were suspected of Nuqtavi tendencies. The author of *Dabistanu'l-Mazahib*[11] states that the Nuqtavis considered Shah Ābbās I a subscriber to their faith and it was through the influence of two of his camp followers—who, in accordance with the order of their sect, had attained the position of *wahdat*—that the Shah made himself conversant with their beliefs. The recordings in this context are not devoid of interest and may be reproduced in brief.

"The Mahmudiyan (Nuqtaviyan) believe that having acquired the principles of their faith from Dervish Torab and Dervish Kemal, two notable Nuqtavis who had attained the status of 'Perfect Unit'—*wahdat-e kamil* - Shah 'Abbās aspired to 'reveal' himself. He, therefore, ordered that both of the mentors be beheaded. It is reported that although he had 'realized' himself, yet he was far from being perfect. But I have heard from an *Amin* (the Trustee) that Shah 'Abbās had achieved the position of a perfect *Amin*, and whomsoever he did not find accredited to this faith, had to lose his life. He had a discussion with me and desired of me to stay back in Isfahan. But I could not oblige him. He then ordered that expenses on account of my travel be defrayed and with that I left for India. It was heard that during Shah 'Abbās' pilgrimage to Meshed, he expressed to Tarab the discomfitures of an arduous journey. Torab answered, "It speaks of your mediocrity. If this Imam whose veneration makes you undergo rigours of journey has found absorption in truth, why do you then search for him in the hollows of Meshed? And if he has not found it, what can you expect of him? Let you search for a living Imam". The Shah asked him who the living Imam was? Torab answered, "It is I". The Shah said, "I shall fire at you. If you do not get killed, I shall be a disciple of yours". To this Tarab said, "Your Imam Reza died of a granule of grape. How may I not die of a bullet?" Indeed he fell a prey to the Shah's bullet.

Brutal treatment from Shah 'Abbās I compelled many Nuqtavis to leave Iran and seek refuge in India. This was facilitated by

Akbar's liberal attitude towards men of all religions and faiths. In his court he not only tolerated but even encouraged free and fearless discussions of various and divergent shades of religious opinions. In this respect, he stood in direct contrast to both the fanatic Shia rulers of Safavi dynasty of Iran and the Sunni zealots of Ottomon empire It was this liberal mindedness of Akbar which attracted innumerable men of letters, artists, calligraphers and thinkers from Iran to India.

During the early years of Shah 'Abbās I's reign, reports were brought to Akbar that the Persian ruler indulged in want on destruction and killing of Qizlbash leaders and other echelons. It was further reported that the Shah persecuted the Nuqtavis in a gruesome manner. Reacting to this inhuman and atrocious treatment of innocent people, Akbar despatched two of his trusted courtiers to the Iranian court with a letter entreating the young ruler to desist from ruthless acts of killing.[12] It subtly referred to the Nuqtavis as being victimized and, in all probability, his able Minister, Abul Fazl must have been instrumental in pursuading Akbar to send a despatch to this purpose.[13] This might prompt us to infer that Abul Fazl himself was influenced considerably by the Nuqtavi thought. In this connection, the statement of the author of *Tarikh-e 'Ālam Āra-e 'Abbāsi* is highly significant. Describing the incident of the murder of Mir Sayyid Ahmad Kashi, the Nuqtavi leader, he writes: "Shaykh Abul Fazl, one of the learned and able men of India entered the services of Jalālu'd-Din Akbar Padshah and attained great respect and influence. He professed this (Nuqtavi) religion and detracted the Emperor from the path of *shariat* by his profaned words of liberal-mindedness. Epistles which he had written in the name of Sayyid Mir Ahmad Kashi were found among his (Sayyid's) tracts and these testify to our assertion."[14]

Like several other intellectuals who had found themselves insecure in Iran on account of their beliefs and convictions, and sought refuge in India under Akbar's liberal treatment, the Nuqtavis also migrated to India in fairly large numbers during the Safavi/Mughal period. The most prominent of these Nuqtavis

was Mir Sharif Amuli. He found access to Akbar's court and engaged himself in free and vigorous exposition of his beliefs. The Emperor appointed him to high posts, ostensibly in recognition of his merits and originality. Among the writers and poets of Nuqtavi faith who were of some consequence at Akbar's court, the most notable are: Ali Akbar Tashbihi Kashi, Muhammad Sufi Amuli, Hakim Ebadullah Kashani and Abdul Ghani Yezdi.[15]

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Exchange of Envoys between the Mughals and the Safavis of Iran*

Political rapport between the Safavi rulers of Iran and the Mughals of India was established right from the time of ascendency of Shah Isma'īl Safavi, the founder of his dynasty, to the Persian throne. Babur suffered a defeat at the hands of Muhammad Shah Bakht Khan Sheybani (Sheybak Khan), the Uzbek, and was campelled to abandon Turkistan and its capital Samarqand, the renowned seat of Timurid empire, and turn towards Afghanistan. Political expediency demanded that he should establish contacts and seek friendship with Shah Isma'īl (I) Safavi, the powerful and inveterate rival of Sheybak Khan. Shah Isma'īl reciprocated Babur's friendly gestures and despatched several of his veteran Qizlbash commanders to render practical assistance to him in recovering his ancestoral lands from Sheybak Khan. But Babur was not able to liquidate the descendants of Sheybak Khan even after the latter had been killed in an action. This sealed his fate in Turkistan for all times to come. He was, therefore, constrained to concentrate his whole attention on Afghanistan and Badakhshan. Two years after the death of Shah Isma'īl Safavi, Babur marched out of Kabul to lead an expedition to India which won him his Indian empire.

After Babur's death, his son Humayun continued to have cordial relations with the Iranian counterpart His exile and a long stay at the court of Shah Tahmasp is a testimony to the great consideration which the Iranian rulers had for their neighbouring royalty.

Humayun died in A. H. 961 (A.D. 1553), and was succeeded by

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his son, Jalālu'd-Din Akbar. Relations between the two ruling houses ran into trouble over the issue of Qandahar, a border town which was destined to become a bone of contention between the two powers for a long time. Qandahar had been under Indian occupation since A. H. 943 (A.D 1536). But Shah Tahmasp took forcible possession of the town and gave cause to Akbar to cease relations with the Iranian court. He did not even despatch his emissary to Iran to convey condolence on the death of Shah Tahmaps. This was an extraordinary expression of resentment and stood in direct contrast to all the accepted norms of protocol. A stalemate ensued in these relations, and internal disorder in Iran during the reign of Shah Isma'īl II and Shah Muhammad Khodabandeh contributed further to their deterioration. An opportunity was seized by the Mughals to recapture Qandahar.

From the very outset of his accession to the throne, Shah 'Abbās I determined to renew friendly relations with India.

His efforts towards this objective were politically motivated, for, he would not like to lose an opportunity of insinuating Akbar against 'Abdullah Khan Uzbek and his son 'Abdul Momin Khan so as to seek release of pressure on Khorasan. The Uzbeks had been subjecting Khorasan, the eastern Persian province, to their wholesale ravages. He despatched his Qizlbash envoy to the Mughal court with fabulous presents and a very cordial letter. Akbar detained this envoy at his court for over five years and then allowed him to return to his native land in the accompaniment of two of his high ranking courtiers. Rich presents and a friendly letter—the contents of which were mostly didactic in nature—were also sent through the envoy. A year later, Shah 'Abbās I despatched one of his close court—officials, Minuchehr Beg by name, as a special envoy to Akbar. He brought with him rich and fascinating presents and a letter toned in perfect humility.

This time again Akbar detained the Iranian ambassador for about seven years. It was only in A.H. 1012 (A.D. 1603), that the envoy could elicit permission to leave the court for his country and was accompanied by Mir Ma'sum Bakri, the Mughal ambassador-designate to Persia. The two envoys arrived at the Safavi court

at a time when Shah 'Abbās was in the thick of a grim battle with the Turks on the other side of the fort at Erewan. The Indian envoy sought to present the letter of Emperor Akbar but the Shah gave him a cold shoulder, for, it had not pleased him that his ambassador should have been detained by Akbar for seven long years. He gave expression to his resentment by condescending to accept only a jaded sword out of the numerous rich presents brought by the Indian envoy. However, the glib-tongued Indian envoy was able to win the favour of the Shah though not without considerable exercise of wit, for, he was also a poet and had adopted *Nami* as his pen-name. The Shah at last accepted the presents though he did not take the last sting out when he ordered that the presents be distributed among his top—ranking civil and military officers and other senior officials in the provinces.

The author of *'Ālam-Ārā-e 'Abbasi*[1] describes the court reception of the Indian envoy in these words :

"An important event coinciding with the siege of Erewan fort is the arrival of Mir Muhammad Ma'sum Khan Bakri. He is one of the trusted nobles of Jalāu'd-Din Akbar, and is the ruler of the *vilayat* of Makr. He accompanied the Iranian envoy Minuchehr Beg—a special official of the Imperial Court—who had been despatched to India in the capacity of an ambassador seven years back. The purpose of the Indian envoy's visit was to revive friendly relations.

Among various presents which he had brought from India was a sword, its sheath and scabbard all wrought in gold, studded with jewels and precious stones. People with an insight in the world of mind said that receiving a present of a sword from the descendant of the house of Timur—a dynasty which had always won laurels on the battle-field and had successfully suppressed the rebellious Afghans at a time when the Shah was engaged in a hectic struggle with his enemies to liberate his ancestoral lands of Shirwan Azerbaijan and Gurjistan, was indicative of a highly auspicious occasion. It raised high hopes of a decisive victory for Shah 'Abbās. They brought the presents to his court and spread out each item in a single file so that on receiving royal consent, these would be presented to the Shah. The attendants of the Khan of Makr (the Indian ambassador) had to mount guard over these for four months of bitter winter when frost and cold chilled souls in human bodies. After the capture of the fort, the Shah accompanied by Sherif Pasha, the governor of Erewan, and other Turkish echelons and Kurd leaders, ordered that the presents from the Indian envoy be displayed officially. At the end (of the ceremony), he ordered that these be distributed among nobles, dignitaries, courtiers and leading personalities in various professions".

This envoy was detained in Iran for about a year. His return to India was agreed to by the Shah only after the capture of the Erewan fort. The letter sent to Akbar through this envoy contained, at length, reasons for launching a sudden attack on Azerbaijan and the victories won there and in Aremenia. This letter throws light on the necessity of reversing the eighteen year old truce with the Turks and the inevitability of direct confrontation with them. We reproduce below relevent extracts from this letter :

'To give details of the conquest of Azerbaijan, it may please Your Majesty to know that the Turkish Sultans had helped strengthen the cause of peace by making a solemn promise to my father (Shah Tahmasp) to give up hostility for all generations to come. In order to abide by his word, my father agreed to hand over to Sultan Bayazid and his children—who had risen in revolt against his father Sultan Suleyman and had sought refuge at this court —the messenger of Sultan Suleyman. Despite this background, he (Turkish Sultan), while finding us busy in dealing with the disturbances among the Qizlbash tribes, took time by forelock and launched an attack on Azerbaijan and Shirwan and took possession of some of the areas which he had, by mutual consent, agreed to let remain under the control of my late father.

Since the heavens ordained that I should deal with this serious situation, keeping in view the general welfare of humanity, I ventured to keep the promised agreement intact. The fort of

Nehawand which falls in between the empires, had fallen in the hands of the Turks. Observing the terms of the agreement of peace and friendship, our troops made no attempt of disturbing the position there. The Turks, however, were repeatedly asked to demolish the fort but they ignored these warnings and thus made a clean breast of their unfriendly intentions which is a trait of their character As their growing insolence became intolerable, Hasan Khan, the governor of Hamadan was charged with the duty of capturing and demolishing it........while the victorious troops were in engagement at Ganja and Shirwan, Your Majesty's ambassador Mir Ma'sum Khan delivered the letter........'

Campaigns undertaken by our imperial troops in these regions were personally witnessed by Mir Ma'sum Khan. Since his ability and versatility beggar no description, he is in a position to submit full accounts of these campaigns."

Shah 'Abbās I and Jehangir

Akbar died in A.H. 1015 (A.D. 1606) and was succeeded by his son Prince Salim. At this juncture, Shah 'Abbās was involved in Azerbaijan affairs and it caused delay in despatching an envoy to India. Three years later Yadgar Sultan 'Ali, a Qizlbash dignitary of Iranian court, and the former governor of Baghdad, was nominated as the Iranian envoy to Jehangir's court. He was a learned man and an absorbing conversationalist. The letter, which he carried for Jehangir, contained Shah 'Abbās' expression of sentiments of grief on the demise of Akbar. In Yadgar Sultan's entourage were fifty Qizlbash horsemen riding swiftest horses bedecked with gold lined accoutrement. Their road to India lay through Qandahar, a step not without subtle meaning. Among the rich presents sent to Jehangir, were fifty Arab and Georgian steeds with bejewelled saddles, three costly Russian fur-coats and more than fifteen hundred varieties of brocade, velvet and superbly embroidered parchments.[2]

Jehangir detained this ambassador at his court for seven long years. During this period there was regular exchange of letters and messages ratifying cordial relations between the two countries. It was during this interlude that Jehangir once sent a special present, an exquisite and extraordinary wine-cup for Shah 'Abbās. In acknowledgement of this friendly gesture, the Shah sent to Jehangir a few pictures engraved on precious stones apparently the work of some Venetian craftsmen. In fact Jehangir had, through one of his special couriers, expressed a desire that such a piece of decoration be sent to him to which Shah 'Abbās accorded deference. The letter from Shah 'Abbās in this context says:

"After waiting for considerable time Your Majesty's courier Hajji Rafiq arrived in the royal court and presented to us the letter and the exquisite cup. These things added to our pleasure so much so that it could tantamount to a spiritual meeting. Furthermore, Muhammad Husain Chelabi expressed that Your Majesty had evinced interest in a few pictures engraved on precious stones ...."[3]

Again sometime later, Jehangir sent a message to Shah 'Abbās through the same Muhammad Husain Chelabi that a few precious jewels, formerly the property of his ancestors—the Timurid princes—whose names remained engraved on one of them, and presently in Safavi coffers, be sent to him. These jewels had been consecrated to the holy shrine of Hazrat 'Ali, and, after seeking the concurrence of the divines of the shrine, the jewels were redeemed, placed in an exquisite container and despatched to Delhi. Shah 'Abbās wrote to Jehangir a personal letter in this connection, the extracts of which run as follows.[4]

"It was conveyed to us by Chelabi that Your Majesty was desirous of procuring some costly jewels, especially one on which the names of Your Majestys' ancestors remain engraved. These had been consecrated to the holy shrine at Najaf and were procured from the custodians of the shrine to be sent along."

Incidentally at this time some Iranian traders brought sets of rare jewels and brocade from the Ottoman kingdom to be presented to Shah 'Abbās. Though the European customers were prepared to pay exorbitant prices for them, yet Shah 'Abbās, honouring the wishes of Jehangir, reserved them for him. Those

very days the Shah had got prepared a bejewelled box for the shrine of 'Ali at Najaf, but for reasons unknown, he obtained permission of the divines to break the box, take out the jewels and sell them away so that the money thus raised would be utilised for religious purposes. Out of these, he lay aside five costly jewels, and in his letter to Jehangir, mentioned against each its price. He wished that in case Jehangir was inclined to purchase them, an expert be sent to Iran to make a selection.

Jehangir's ambassador to Iran, Hajji Rafiq, once made a casual reference to the desire of Jehangir to obtain from the Safavi ruler Mirza Ulugh Beg's astronomical tables which had remained deposited in state coffers.

Shah 'Abbās immediately engaged his court astronomers and technicians in making a prototype of the renowned Timurid astronomer-prince's tables which he retained in his treasury and despatched the original to Jehangir together with a polite letter.

To one of his ambassadors to Iranian court, Jehangir had expressed his deep interest in a cornelian rosary. Shah 'Abbās arranged a costly one and sent it to him along with a letter in which he subtly complained of detaining his ambassadors for a long time at Delhi. The extract runs :

"For quite some time we have had to know nothing of those quarters and of the delegations from outside. However, we are despatching Khwajeh Karim, and through him, a cornelian rosary. Another rosary brought us from Mecca is also sent through the aforesaid person".

It must be noted that on occurence of a victory won by any one side over their enemy, the news was conveyed to the counterpart along with presents selected from the captured booty. This custom, for instance, was observed when in A.H. 1032 (A.D. 1622) Baghdad fell into the hands of the Iranian troops and Aqa Muhammad, the Iranian Ambassador, carried presents of that capture to Jehangir.[5]

The Mission of Khan 'Ālam

It has already been mentioned that Jehangir detained Yadgar 'Ali Sultan, the Iranian Ambassador, for over seven years and it

was only in A.H. 1026 (A.D. 1617) that this ambassador accompanied by his counterpart, Mirza Barkhordar Khan (Khan 'Ālam), was allowed to return home. In *Tuzak-e Jehangiri*, we find a fuller description of the articles and cash allowed to Yadgar 'Ali Sultan Talish as gifts for successful conclusion of his mission at the Mughal court.

Mirza Barkhordar Khan, Jehangir's celebrated ambassador to the Safavi court, was a descendant of the line of Timur, a member of the renowned clan of Barlas and a close blood-relation of the emperor. He had won Jehangir's affection, and the emperor used to address him as '*bhai*'-brother Jehangir despatched him to the Safavi court with several rich presents and a very affectionate letter, the text of which has been reproduced by Nasrullah Falsafi in the fourth volume of his work on Shah 'Abbās. This ambassador had about a thousand persons in his entourage, and of the presents which he carried along with himself, there were ten massive elephants with golden sedans and profusely gold-embroidered head-gears, many species of wild animals like lions, leopards, rhinoceros, gazelle, dare, ibex and many multicoloured birds

On setting his foot on the Iranian soil, Khan 'Ālam procrastinated his stay at Herat, for, he had learnt of Shah 'Abbās' preoccupations in Azerbaijan and of his Turkish campaigns. At this juncture Yadgar Sultan Talish left behind him the whole Indian entourage, and proceeded to report to Shah 'Abbās the impending arrival of the Indian ambassador. The Shah detailed a Shamloo chieftain and courtier, 'Ali Beg by name, as something like the Chief of Protocol in modern terminology, to receive the envoy and escort him to Yezd and Meshed. He was also instructed to detain the entire diplomatic corps in that city for sometime.

The Italian traveller, Pietro della Valle, who was present at Qazvin at this time, and had accompanied the Shah in his Turkish compaigns, has recorded the arrival of Khan 'Ālam in these words :

"On 17th July 1618, forenoon, while camping at Qazvin, a messenger from the Ambassador of Shah Salim, Emperor of India (usually called Mughul-e Kabir in Iran) was brought to the presence of the Shah. This ambassador had set out on his journey sometime back and the Iranian royal court has been awaiting his arrival eagerly. As he travels very leisurely, his arrival continues to be awaited In the meanwhile the Shah has ordered that mansions should be acquired and furnished at Farahabad, Mazandaran and elsewhere, to house the ambassador and his entourage.

The messenger informed the Shah that the ambassador had arrived in Teheran, a distance of two days travel from Qazvin, and was expected to cover it in ten to twelve days. The messenger also presented a few letters from the ambassador but the Shah was not disposed to read them over or perhaps he could not read for fear of state secrets being divulged in public. He made a few enquiries about the ambassador and, showing the messenger due consideration, entrusted him to the care of Saro Khwajeh, a renowned dignitary and minister at the royal court. But without any open announcement, he resolved not to wait any longer at Qazvin and there by put the Indian envoy to embarrassment for a while for his slackened speed.

Having concluded his Azerbaijan campaigns, Shah 'Abbās returned to Qazvin and there, on 21 of Dhu'l-Qa'da, 1027, corresponding to Nov. 11, 1618, Sunday, Khan 'Ālam was formally received by a whole host of top-ranking civil and military officials and escorted to a mansion near Bāgh-e Sa'ādat at Qazvin. Next day, the Shah came out for a game of golf on the grounds of Sa'ādat Abad, and chose this occasion to receive the ambassador. In such matters, and many more, the Shah always consulted his court astronomer for propitious moments. He betrayed sentiments of great favour by kissing Khan 'Ālam on his cheeks. The author of '*Ālam Āra-e- Abbasi*' records :

"Next day, when His Imperial Majesty delighted himself with a game of golf on the Sa'ādat Maidan, Khan 'Ālam made a respectful bow and, in return, was shown extraordinary favour. The Shah, said, "Since there exist brotherly relations between His Imperial Majesty and Our Majesty, and you have been introduced to us as a brother of His Majesty, therefore, a brother of a brother is also our brother". For this very reason the Shah embraced him without inhibition or need of acquiescence to rigidities of formalities

Pietro della Valle gives us an interesting description of Shah 'Abbas' first formal banquet given in honour of the Indian ambassador. Here is in brief what he says :[6]

On November 11, 1618, the Shah ordered a grand illumination around the ground in the suburbs of the city of Qazvin. A wooden fence was erected all around to ensure that people on foot alone came on to the grounds The Shah, accompanied by his courtiers, too, arrived on foot and spent almost the whole night under brightly illumined chandaliers indulging in bouts of drinking and light entertainment. The same night, the Indian envoy, who was very slow in his march, arrived at Qazvin after having been kept back at Qom for several months. He has been summoned only after the Shah returned to Qazvin But the envoy seemed to pay scant attention to the illuminations set afoot in his honour, and contrary to the expectations of the courtiers, he did not venture to put up his appearance before the Shah on the grounds in the vicinity of the city. On the other hand, he set off for the Bāgh-e Jamā'at (Bagh-e Sa'ādat) to relax for the night in a house specially arranged to receive the extraordinary guest. Next night illumination jamboree was resumed and the Shah received him with exclusive favour and regard. They spent the whole night together helping themselves to drinks and confidential coversation in a house named Ali Pasha's Mansion-a really cosy and imposing palace. Iranian high-ups, senior officials and many accredited guests to the banquet were obliged to saunter about on the ground outside and betake themselves to drinking and revelries because the capacious hall and the rooms of the house were fully occupied by the ambassador's attendants.

Three days later, on the very grounds of Sa'ādat Ābad, rich Indian presents extending over as many as three hundred varieties were laid bare before the Shah for his inspection.

With the passage of time familiarity developed between the Shah and the Indian ambassador. Wherever the Shah went, the ambassador had to accompany him and had to be present in his court for most of his time. When at last the Shah returned to his capital, Isfahan, he saw that all formalities of protocol were meticulously observed in according state reception to the Indian ambassador. For two years, Khan 'Ālam had the unique privilege to be present in private or public meetings of the Shah of Iran. Their close association for a long period bred familiarity between them and the Shah used to address him as Jan 'Ālam instead of Khan 'Ālam. He even took the liberty of indulging in pleasantries with the Shah, sometimes twitching his moustache. It was during one of these pleasantries that the Shah asked Khan 'Ālam how surprising it was that the Indian ambassadors to his court were only Iranians. "Why not Indians ?" he asked. "Man is a rare commodity in India, Your Majesty," came the reply from the ambassador.

Jehangir had also despatched to Iran some of his court artists to draw for him sketches of Shah 'Abbās and his court. Three of them have been named in *Tuzak-e Jehangiri.* They are Bishen Dass, Khairat Khan and Lakh Raj. Of their works so far preserved, we have four from Bishen Dass, one each from Khairat Khan and Lakh Raj. These depict Shah 'Abbās among his courtiers and officials.

Shah 'Abbās kept Khan 'Ālam at his court for over two years during which period the latter hardly lost an opportunity of being in the company of the Shah even at odd places like the Kahwa Khaneh (coffee house) bazaars, streets or hunting expeditions. The Shah carefully contrived to make a grand display of his riches, soldiery, men and material, to impress upon the Indian envoy his glory. The author of the Persian memoir *Riyāzu'sh-sho'arā* writes that the grand display of his magnificent upkeep coupled with personal friendship and familiarity prompted Khan 'Ālam to speak of Shah 'Abbās' court in extraordinary laudable terms to Jehangir, and this led to the Emperor's displeasure with the result that Khan 'Ālam ultimately fell from favour.

On 16th of Sha'bān A.H. 1029 (A.D. 1620), Khan 'Ālam received royal permission to his proposed return journey to India, and a high-ranking Iranian chieftain, Zeynal Beg Shamloo, was to accompany him with fabulous presents and a letter the contents of which were couched in polite and friendly words. The text of this letter has been incorporated in the pages of *Sabhatu'l-Akhbar* and has been reproduced on page 93 of volume IV of *Zindagani-e Shah 'Abbās*.

On the eve of Khan 'Ālam's return to India, Shah 'Abbās issued an order forbidding his subjects to accompany Khan 'Ālam to India. Perhaps it had been brought to his notice that Khan 'Ālam had extended promises and made commitments to some of his Iranian friends to help them leave Iran and seek admission to the Mughal military ranks as the Mughal army was in sore need of capable Iranian officers. Pietro della Valle writes that there are many Iranian soliders in the armed services of Shah Salim. A large number of Iranians proceed to India in pursuit of wealth but there are also others who commit crimes and flee to India to escape punishment.

Shortly before his departure from Iran, Khan 'Ālam despatched one of his secretaries, Shah Muhammad by name, to Jehangir's court to inform the emperor of the ambassador's return journey. Shah 'Abbās also sent a personal letter to Jehangir through the above mentioned Shah Muhammad in which he conveyed his formal permission to Khan 'Ālam's departure.

Events subsequent to Khan 'Ālam's departure largely riveted on Qandahar issue as far as relations between the two ruling houses were concerned. Shah 'Abbās' dubiously executed plan of capturing Qandahar met with full success. Jehangir could do little to reverse the situation. It was only after the death of Shah 'Abbās that Shah Jahan seized an opportunity and recaptured the lost territory and prestige in Qandahar.

Zeynal Beg accompanied Khan 'Ālam as Shah 'Abbās'

ambassador to the Mughal court. He presented his credentials to the Emperor at Lahore. A notable thing of the ceremony was that Zeynal Beg did not observe the customary practice of bowing to the Emperor, but walked straight upto him with a haughty demeanour. Jehangir took notice of the envoy's discourteous deportment. The envoy, despite admonishments and entreaties, was not disposed to accept strict observance of court decorum.

It has been recorded that in order to make the Iranian ambassador bow in the court after the fashion of the day, Jehangir ordered that a small door be cut in the wall to allow entry to this ambassador so that he might have to bend his body to pass through it, and that would pass for his observance of the custom of bowing before the Emperor. But the defiant ambassador contrived to find a dodge by entering sidewise. The offended Emperor ordered that the ambassador be no more permitted to enter the royal court and disallowed his participation in state banquets. His daily allowances also were stopped and Zeynal was constrained to sell away his golden pottery and other costly household effects to meet day to day expenses.[7]

On the eve of Zeynal Beg's departure to Iran, Jehangir felt an inclination to honour him with substantial presents as had been done with Khan 'Ālam by Shah 'Abbās. But such awards and favours carried the strict condition that the recepient should have observed all formalities meticulously and Zeynal had failed to do so. No presents were given to him and Jehangir secretly conveyed to Shah 'Abbas I his displeasure at Zeynal Beg's behaviour. But the author of *Zīndagani-e Shah Abbās I* says that though ostensibly Shah 'Abbās reproached his envoy for his deportment, yet in heart of hearts, he felt glibly over it. This is borne by the fact that shortly after his return to Iran in A.H. 1034 (A.D. 1625), Zeynal Beg was honoured with the title of 'Khan' and elevated to the position of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief.

SHAH JEHAN :

As prince-regent, Khorram despatched one of his trusted officers

namely Zahid Beg, to the court of the Iranian king with rich presents and a cordial letter in A.H. 1030 (A.H. 1626). At this juncture Shah 'Abbās was on his move towards Qandahar, but stayed a while at Meshed to receive the emissary. Prince Khorram had expressed a desire that Shah 'Abbās should recognise his title of Shah Jahan, which request the latter conceded by subtly incorporating this verse in his letter :

Ze Rhurrami shud azan bakht-i ruzgar jawan
Kih nur-i deeda-i khurshid gasht Shah-e Jahan

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